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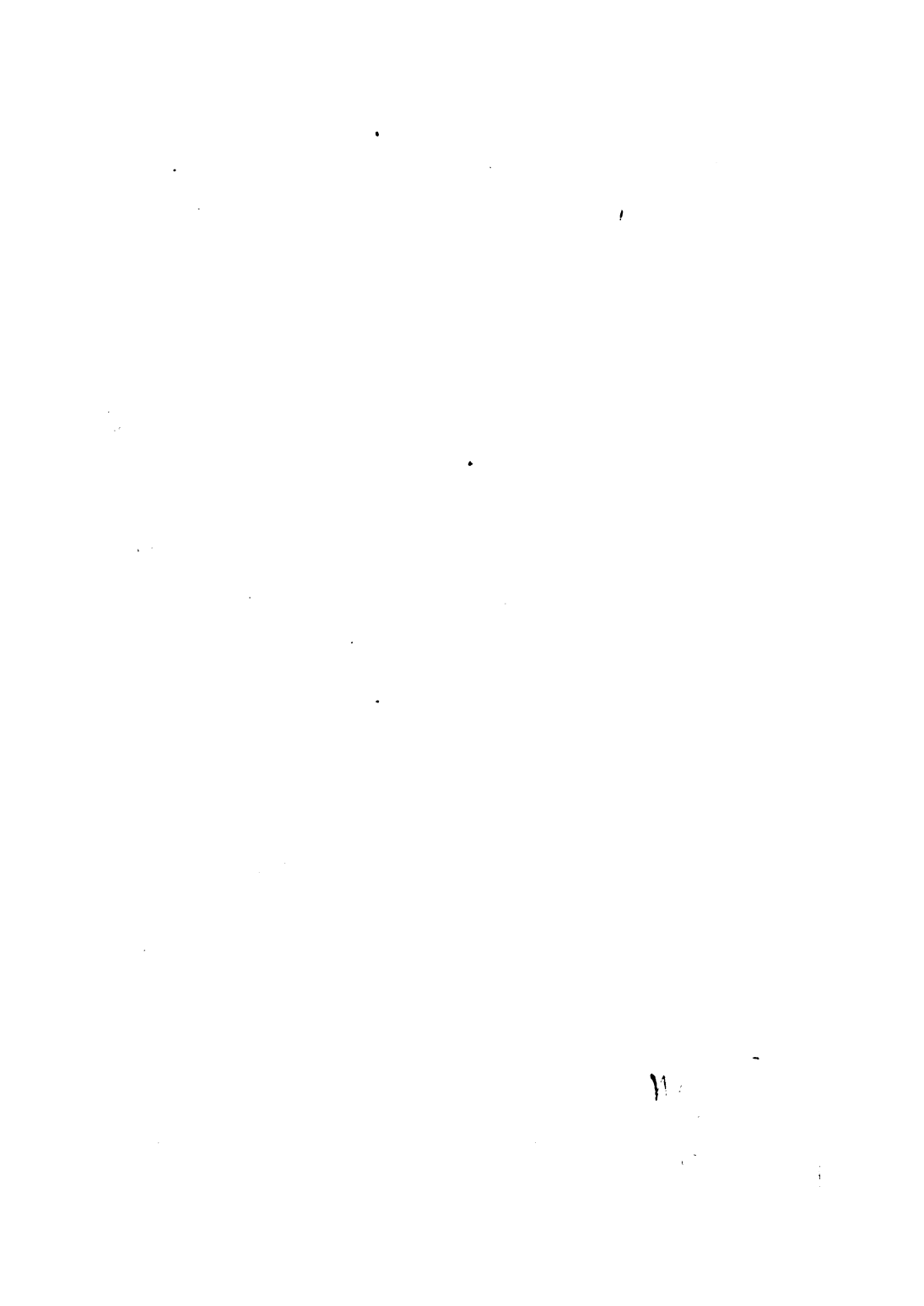
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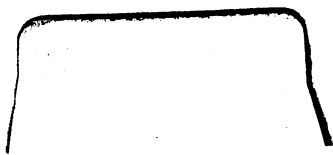
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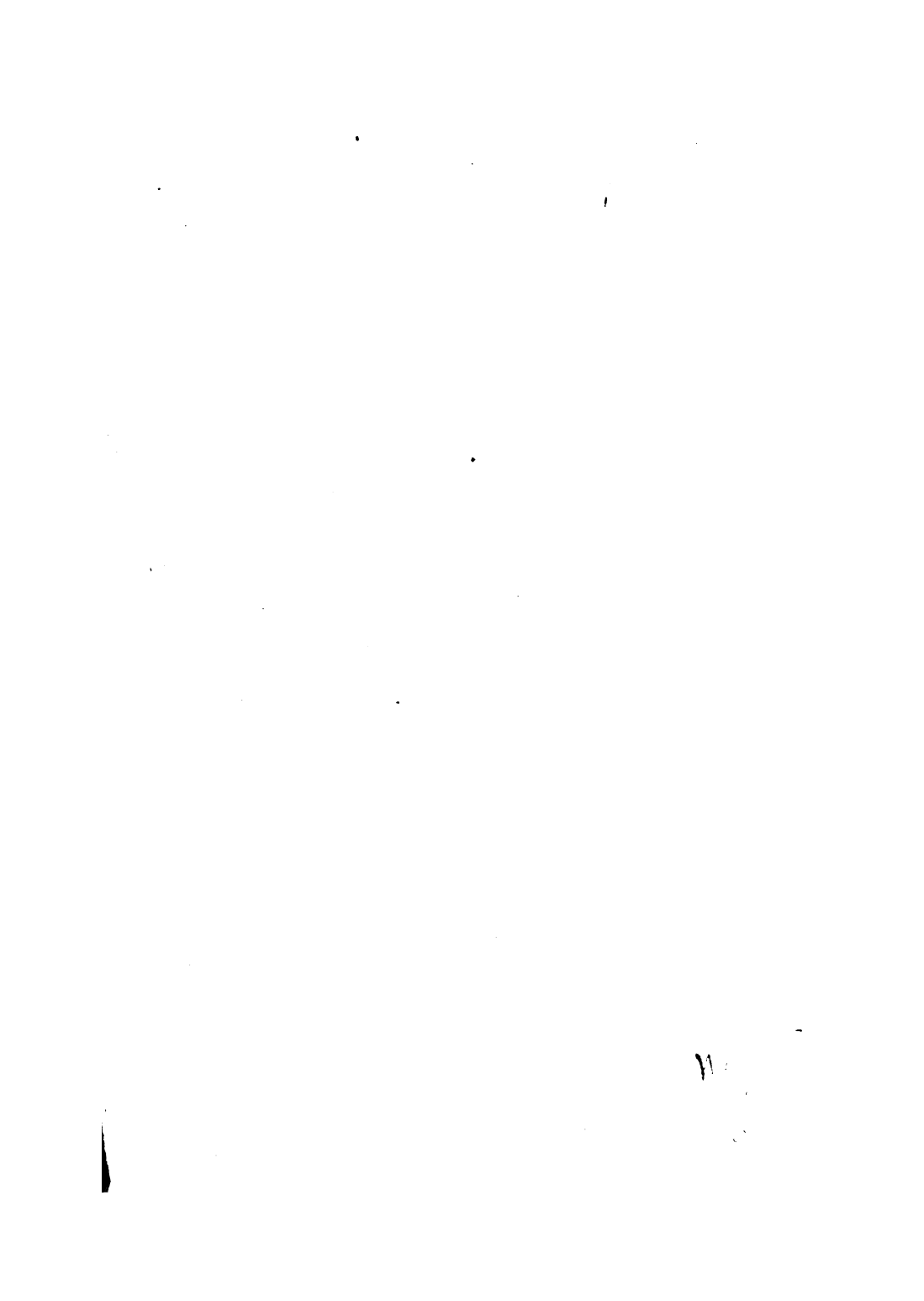


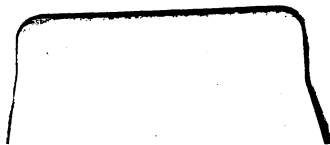
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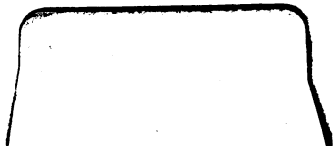


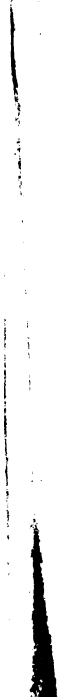




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THE GOLDEN HYNDE
AND OTHER POEMS



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THE GOLDEN HYNDE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ALFRED NOYES

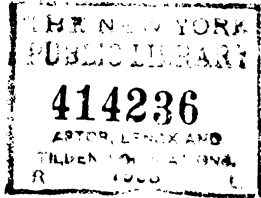
AUTHOR OF "POEMS," "THE FLOWER OF
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THE GOLDEN HYNDE
AND OTHER POEMS



THE GOLDEN HYNDE

I

WITH the fruit of Aladdin's Garden clustering
thick in her hold,
With rubies a-wash in her scuppers and her
bilge a-blaze with gold,
A world in arms behind her to sever her heart
from home,
The *Golden Hynde* drove onward, over the glit-
tering foam.

II

If we go, as we came, by the Southward, we
meet wi' the fleets of Spain!
'Tis a thousand to one against us; we'll turn
to the West again;
We have captured a China pilot, his charts and
his golden keys;

We'll sail to the golden Gateway, over the
golden seas.

III

What shall we see as we sail there? Clusters
of coral and palm,
Oceans of silken slumber, measureless leagues
of calm,
Islands of purple story, lit with the Westering
gleam,
Washed by the unknown whisper, dreaming
the world-wide dream.

IV

There will be shores of sirens, with arms that
beckon us near,
As they stand knee-deep in the foam-flowers,
with perilous breasts and hair;
Sweet is the rest they proffer; but what shall
we gain of these

When we gaze on the golden Gateway that
shines on the golden seas?

v

Wound in their white embraces, couched in the
lustrous gloom,
Gazing ever to seaward thro' the broad mag-
nolia bloom,
We should weary of all their kisses when, under
the first white star,
Over the limitless ocean, the golden Gates unbar.

vi

White arms will strive to hold us; but we shall
rise and go
Down to the salt sea-beaches where the waves
are whispering low:
White arms will plead in anguish as the sails fill
out to the breeze,
And we turn to the golden Gateway that burns
on the golden seas!

VII

We shall put out from shore then, out to the
Western skies,
With the old despairing rapture and the sunset
in our eyes!
What shall we gain of our going, what of the
fading gleam,
What of the gathering darkness, what of the
dying dream?

VIII

Only the unknown glory, only the hope deferred,
Only the wondrous whisper, only the unknown
Word,
Voice of the God that gave us billow and beam
and breeze,
As we sail to the golden Gateway, over the
golden seas.

AT DAWN

O Hesper-Phosphor, far away,
 Shining, the first, the last white star,
Hear'st thou the strange, the ghostly cry,
That moan of an ancient agony
From purple forest to golden sky
 Shivering over the breathless bay?
It is not the wind that wakes with the day;
 For see, the gulls that wheel and call,
 Beyond the tumbling white-topped bar,
Catching the sun-dawn on their wings,
 Like snow-flakes or like rose-leaves fall,
Flutter and fall in airy rings;
 And drift, like lilies ruffling into blossom
 Upon some golden lake's unwrinkled bosom.

Are not the forest's deep-lashed fringes wet
With tears? Is not the voice of all regret

Breaking out of the dark earth's heart?
She too, she too, has loved and lost; and we —
We that remember our lost Arcady,
Have we not known, we too,
The primal greenwood's arch of blue,
The radiant clouds at sunrise curled
Around the brows of the golden world;
The marble temples, washed with dew,
To which with rosy limbs aflame
The violet-eyed Thalassian came,
Came, pitiless, only to display
How soon the youthful splendour dies away;
Came only to depart
Laughing across the grey-grown bitter sea;
For each man's life is earth's epitome,
And though the years bring more than aught
they take,
Yet might his heart and hers well break
Remembering how one prayer must still be vain,

How one fair hope is dead,
One passion quenched, one glory fled
With those first loves that never come again.

How many years, how many generations,
Have heard that sigh in the dawn,
When the dark earth yearns to the unforgotten
nations
And the old loves withdrawn,
Old loves, old lovers, wonderful and unnumbered
As waves on the wine-dark sea.
'Neath the tall white towers of Troy and the
temples that slumbered
In Thessaly?

From the beautiful palaces, from the miracu-
lous portals,
The swift white feet are flown!
They were taintless of dust, the proud, the
peerless Immortals

As they sped to their loftier throne!
Perchance they are there, earth dreams, on the
shores of Hesper,
Her rosy-bosomed Hours,
Listening the wild fresh forest's enchanted
whisper,
Crowned with its new strange flowers;
Listening the great new ocean's triumphant
thunder
On the stainless unknown shore,
While that perilous queen of the world's delight
and wonder
Comes white from the foam once more.

When the mists divide with the dawn o'er those
glittering waters,
Do they gaze over uncoared seas —
Naiad and nymph and the woodland's rose-
crowned daughters

And the Oceanides?
Do they sing together, perchance, in that dia-
mond splendour,
That world of dawn and dew,
With eyelids twitching to tears and with eyes
grown tender
The sweet old songs they knew,
The songs of Greece? Ah, with harp-strings
mute do they falter
As the earth like a small star pales?
When the heroes launch their ship by the smok-
ing altar
Does a memory lure their sails?
Far, far away, do their hearts resume the story
That never on earth was told,
When all those urgent oars on the waste of glory
Cast up its gold?

Are not the forest fringes wet
With tears? Is not the voice of all regret

Breaking out of the dark earth's heart?

She too, she too, has loved and lost; and though

She turned last night in disdain

Away from the sunset-embers,

From her soul she can never depart;

She can never depart from her pain.

Vainly she strives to forget;

Beautiful in her woe,

She awakes in the dawn and remembers.

A SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY

(IN HONOUR OF ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE)

(*B. April 5, 1837*)

I

HE needs no crown of ours, whose golden heart
Poured out its wealth so freely in pure praise
Of others: him the imperishable bays
Crown, and on Sunium's height he sits apart:
He hears immortal greetings this great morn,
Fain would we bring, we also, all we may,
Some wayside flower of transitory bloom,
Frail tribute only born
To greet the gladness of this April day —
Then waste on Death's dark wind its faint
perfume.

II

Here, on this April day, the whole sweet Spring
Speaks thro' his music only, or seems to speak;

And we that hear, with hearts uplift and weak,
What can we more than claim him for our king?
Here, on this April day (and many a time
Shall Spring return and find him singing still)
He is one with the world's great heart
beyond the years,
One with the pulsing rhyme
Of tides that work some heavenly rhythmic
will
And hold the secret of all human tears.

III

For he, the last of that immortal race
Whose music like a robe of living light
Re-clothed each new-born age and made it
bright
As with the glory of Love's transfiguring face,
Reddened earth's roses, kindled the deep blue
Of England's radiant ever-singing sea,

Recalled the white Thalassian from the foam
Woke the dim stars anew
And triumphed in the triumph of Liberty,
We claim him; but he hath not here his
home.

IV

Not here! Round him to-day the clouds divide.
We know what faces thro' that rose-flushed air
Now bend above him — Shelley's face is there,
And Hugo's lit with more than kingly pride;
Replenished there with splendour the blind eyes
Of Milton bend from heaven to meet his own;
Sappho is there crowned with those queen-
lier flowers
Whose graft outgrew our skies,
His gift: Shakespeare leans earthward from
his throne
With hands outstretched. He needs no
crown of ours.

THE NET OF VULCAN

I

FROM peaks that clove the heavens asunder
The hunch-back god with sooty claws
Loomed o'er the night, a cloud of thunder,
And hurled the net of mortal laws;
It flew, and all the world grew dimmer;
Its blackness blotted out the stars,
Then fell across the rosy glimmer
That told where Venus couched with Mars.

II

And, when the steeds that draw the morning
Spurned from their Orient hooves the spray,
All vainly soared the lavrock, warning
Those tangled lovers of the day:
Still with those twin white waves in blossom

Against the warrior's rock-broad breast,
The netted light of the foam-born bosom
Breathed like a sea at rest.

III

And light was all that followed after,
Light the derision of the sky,
Light the divine Olympian laughter
Of kindlier gods in days gone by:
Low to her lover whispered Venus,
'The shameless net be praised for this —
When night herself no more could screen us
It snared us one more hour of bliss.'

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

I

Cloud upon cloud, the purple pinewoods clung
to the rich Arcadian mountains,
Holy-sweet as a column of incense, where
Eurydice roamed and sung:
All the hues of the gates of heaven flashed from
The white enchanted fountains
Where in the flowery glades of the forest the
rivers that sing to Arcadia sprung.

White as a shining marble Dryad, supple and
sweet as a rose in blossom,
Fair and fleet as a fawn that shakes the dew
from the fern at break of day,
Wreathed with the clouds of her dusky hair that
kissed and clung to her sun-bright bosom,

Down to the valley she came, and the sound
of her feet was the bursting of flowers in
May.

Down to the valley she came, for far and far be-
low in the dreaming meadows
Pleaded ever the Voice of voices, calling his
love by her golden name;
So she arose from her home in the hills, and down
through the blossoms that danced with
their shadows,
Out of the blue of the dreaming distance,
down to the heart of her lover she came.

Red were the lips that hovered above her lips in
the flowery haze of the June-day,
Red as a rose through the perfumed mist of
passion that reeled before her eyes;
Strong the smooth young sunburnt arms that

folded her heart to his heart in the noon-
day,
Strong and supple with throbbing sunshine
under the blinding southern skies.

Ah, the kisses, the little murmurs, mad with pain
for their phantom fleetness,
Mad with pain for the passing of love that
lives, they dreamed — as we dream — for
an hour!

Ah, the sudden tempest of passion, mad with
pain for its oversweetness.

As petal by petal and pang by pang their love
broke out into perfect flower.

Ah, the wonder as once he wakened, out of a
dream of remembered blisses,
Couched in the meadows of dreaming blossom
to feel, like the touch of a flower on his
eyes,

Cool and fresh with the fragrant dews of dawn
the touch of her light swift kisses,
Shed from the shadowy rose of her face be-
tween his face and the warm blue skies.

II

Lost in his new desire
He dreamed away the hours;
His lyre
Lay buried in the flowers:

To whom the King of Heaven,
Apollo, lord of light
Had given
Such beauty, love, and might:

Might, if he would, to slay
All evil dreams and pierce
The grey
Veil of the Universe;



With love that holds in one
Sacred and ancient bond

The sun
And all the vast beyond;

And beauty to enthrall
The soul of man to heaven:

Yea, all
Such gifts was Orpheus given.

Yet in his dream's desire
He drowsed away the hours:

His lyre
Lay buried in the flowers.

Then in his wrath arose
Apollo, lord of light,
That shows
The wrong deed from the right;

And by what radiant laws
O'erruling human needs
 The cause
To consequence proceeds;

How balanced is the sway
He gives each mortal doom;
 How day
Demands the atoning gloom:

How all good things await
The soul that pays the price
 To fate
By equal sacrifice;

And how on him that sleeps
For less than labour's sake
 There creeps,
Uncharmed, the Pythian snake.

III

Lulled by the wash of the feathery grasses, a sea
with many a sun-swept billow,
Heart to heart in the heart of the summer,
lover by lover asleep they lay,
Hearing only the whirring cicada that chirruped
awhile at their popped pillow
Faint and sweet as the murmur of men that
laboured in villages far away.

Was not the menace indeed more silent? Ah,
what care for labour and sorrow?
Gods in the meadows of moly and amaranth
surely might envy their deep sweet bed
Here where the butterflies troubled the lilies of
peace, and took no thought for the mor-
row,
And golden-girdled bees made feast as over
the lotos the soft sun spread.

Nearer, nearer the menace glided, out of the
gorgeous gloom around them,
Out of the poppy-haunted shadows deep in
the heart of the purple brake;
Till through the hush and the heat as they lay,
and their own sweet listless dreams en-
wound them, —
Mailed and mottled with hues of the grape-
bloom suddenly, quietly, glided the snake.

Subtle as jealousy, supple as falsehood, diamond-
headed and cruel as pleasure,
Coil by coil he lengthened and glided, straight
to the fragrant curve of her throat:
There in the print of the last of the kisses that
still glowed red from the sweet long pres-
sure,
Fierce as famine and swift as lightning over
the glittering lyre he smote.

IV

And over the cold white body of love and delight

Orpheus arose in the terrible storm of his
grief,

With quivering up-clutched hands, deadly and
white,

And his whole soul wavered and shook like a
wind-swept leaf :

As a leaf that beats on a mountain, his spirit in
vain

Assaulted his doom and beat on the Gates of
Death :

Then prone with his arms o'er the lyre he sobbed
out his pain,

And the tense chords faintly gave voice to the
pulse of his breath.

And he heard it and rose, once again, with the
lyre in his hand,

And smote out the cry that his white-lipped
sorrow denied:

And the grief's mad ecstasy swept o'er the sum-
mer-sweet land,

And gathered the tears of all Time in the rush
of its tide.

There was never a love forsaken or faith for-
sworn,

There was never a cry for the living or moan
for the slain,

But was voiced in that great consummation of
song; ay, and borne

To storm on the Gates of the land whence none
cometh again.

Transcending the barriers of earth, comprehend-
ing them all,

He followed the soul of his loss with the night
in his eyes;

And the portals lay bare' to him there; and he
heard the faint call
Of his love o'er the rabble that wails by the
river of sighs.

Yea, there in the mountains before him he knew
it of old,
That portal enormous of gloom, he had seen it
in dreams,
When the secrets of Time and of Fate through
his harmonies rolled;
And behind it he heard the dead moan by
their desolate streams.

And he passed through the Gates with the light
and the cloud of his song,
Dry-shod over Lethe he passed to the chasms
of Hell;
And the hosts of the dead made mock at him,
crying, how long

Have we dwelt in the darkness, oh fool, and
shall evermore dwell?

Did our lovers not love us? the grey skulls
hissed in his face;

Were our lips not red? Were these cavernous
eyes not bright?

Yet us, whom the soft flesh clothed with such
roseate grace,

Our lovers would loathe if we ever returned
to their sight!

Oh then, through the soul of the Singer, a pity
so vast

Mixed with his anguish that, smiting anew
on his lyre,

He caught up the sorrows of hell in his utterance
at last,

Comprehending the need of them all in his
own great desire.

V

And they that were dead, in his radiant music,
 heard the moaning of doves in the olden
 Golden-girdled purple pinewood, heard the
 moan of the roaming sea;
Heard the chant of the soft-winged songsters,
 nesting now in the fragrant golden
 Olden haunted blossoming bowers of lovers
 that wandered in Arcady;

Saw the soft blue veils of shadow floating over
 the billowy grasses
 Under the crisp white curling clouds that
 sailed and trailed through the melting
 blue;

Heard once more the quarrel of lovers above
 them pass, as a lark-song passes,
 Light and bright, till it vanished away in
 an eyebright heaven of silvery dew.

White as a dream of Aphrodite, supple and sweet
as a rose in blossom,

Fair and fleet as a fawn that shakes the dew
from the fern at break of day;

Wreathed with the clouds of her dusky hair, that
kissed and clung to her sun-bright bosom,

On through the deserts of hell she came, and
the brown air bloomed with the light of
May.

On through the deserts of hell she came; for
over the fierce and frozen meadows

Pleaded ever the Voice of voices, calling his
love by her golden name;

So she arose from her grave in the darkness,
and up through the wailing fires and
shadows,

On by chasm and cliff and cavern, out of the
horrors of death she came.

Then had she followed him, then had he won her,
striking a chord that should echo for ever,
Had he been steadfast only a little, nor
paused in the great transcendent song;
But ere they had won to the glory of day, he
came to the brink of the flaming river
And ceased, to look on his love a moment, a
little moment, and over long.

VI

O'er Phlegethon he stood:
Below him roared and flamed
The flood
For utmost anguish named.

And lo, across the night,
The shining form he knew
With light
Swift footsteps upward drew.

Up through the desolate lands

She stole, a ghostly star,

With hands

Outstretched to him afar.

With arms outstretched, she came

In yearning majesty,

The same

Royal Eurydice.

Up through the ghastly dead

She came, with shining eyes

And red

Sweet lips of child-surprise.

Up through the wizened crowds

She stole, as steals the moon

Through clouds

Of flowery mist in June.

He gazed: he ceased to smite

The golden-chorded lyre:

Delight

Consumed his heart with fire.

Though in that deadly land

His task was but half-done,

His hand

Drooped, and the fight half won.

He saw the breasts that glowed,

The fragrant clouds of hair ;

They flowed

Around him like a snare.

O'er Phlegethon he stood,

For utmost anguish named :

The flood

Below him roared and flamed

Out of his hand the lyre

Suddenly slipped and fell :

The fire

Acclaimed it into hell.

The night grew dark again :

There came a bitter cry

Of pain,

Oh, Love, once more I die !

And lo, the earth-dawn broke,

And like a wraith she fled :

He woke

Alone: his love was dead.

He woke on earth: the day

Shone coldly: at his side

There lay

The body of his bride.

VII

Only now when the purple vintage bubbles and

winks in the autumn glory,

Only now when the great white oxen drag the

weight of the harvest home,

D

Sunburnt labourers, under the star of the sunset,
sing as an old-world story
How two pale and thwarted lovers ever
through Arcady still must roam.

Faint as the silvery mists of morning over the
peaks that the noonday parches,
On through the haunts of the gloaming musk-
rose, down to the rivers that glisten be-
low,
Ever they wander from meadow to pinewood,
under the whispering woodbine arches,
Faint as the mist of the dews of the dusk
when violets dream and the moon-winds
blow.

Though the golden lute of Orpheus gathered the
splendours of earth and heaven,
All the golden greenwood notes and all the
chimes of the changing sea,

Old men over the fires of winter murmur again
that he was not given
The steadfast heart divine to rule that infinite
freedom of harmony.

Therefore he failed, say they; but we, that have
no wisdom, can only remember
How through the purple perfumed pinewoods
white Eurydice roamed and sung:
How through the whispering gold of the wheat,
where the poppy burned like a crimson
ember,
Down to the valley in beauty she came, and
under her coming the flowers up-sprung.

Down to the valley she came, for far and far
below in the dreaming meadows
Pleaded ever the Voice of voices, calling his
love by her golden name;

So she arose from her home in the hills, and
down through the blossoms that danced
with their shadows

Out of the blue of the dreaming distance,
down to the heart of her lover she came.

FROM THE SHORE

I

Love, so strangely lost and found,
Love, beyond these Gates of Death,
Love, immortally re-crowned,
Love, who swayest this mortal breath,
Sweetlier to thy lover's ear
Steals the tale that ne'er was told:
Bright-eyes, ah, thine arms are near,
Nearer now than e'er of old.

II

When on earth thy hands were mine,
Mine to hold for evermore,
Oft we watched the sunset shine
Lonelier from this wave-beat shore;
Pent in prison-cells of clay

Time had power on thee and me,
Thou and heaven are one to-day
One with earth and sky and sea.

III

Indivisible and one
Beauty hath unlocked the gate,
Oped the portals of the sun,
Burst the bars of Time and Fate:
Violets in the dawn of Spring
Hold the secret of thine eyes;
Lilies bare their breasts and fling
Scents of thee from Paradise.

IV

Brooklets have thy talk by rote,
Thy farewells array the West;
Fur that clasped thee round the throat
Leaps — a squirrel — to its nest:
Backward from a sparkling eye,

Half-forgotten jests return
Where the rabbit lollops by
Hurry-scurry through the fern.

v

Roses where I lonely pass,
Brush my brow and breathe thy kiss;
Zephyrs whispering through the grass
Lure me on from bliss to bliss;
Here thy robe is rustling close,
There thy fluttering lace is blown;
All the tide of beauty flows
Tributary to thine own.

vi

Birds that sleek their shining throats
Capture every curve from thee,
All their golden warbled notes —
Fragments of thy melody —
Crowding, clustering, one by one,

Build it upward, spray by spray,
Till the lavrock in the sun
Pours thy rapture down the day.

VII

Silver birch and purple pine,
Crumpled fern and crimson rose
Flash to feel their beauty thine,
Clasp and fold thee, warm and close;
Every beat and gleam of wings
Holds thee in its bosom furled,
All that chatters, laughs and sings
Darts thy sparkle round the world.

VIII

Love, so strangely lost and found,
Love, beyond these Gates of Death,
Love, immortally re-crowned,
Love, who swayest this mortal breath,

Sweetlier to thy lover's ear

Steals the tale that ne'er was told:

Bright-eyes, ah, thine arms are near,

Nearer now than e'er of old.

THE RETURN

I

O HEDGES white with laughing may,
O meadows where we met,
This heart of mine must break to-day
Unless ye, too, forget.

II

Breathe not so sweet, breathe not so sweet,
But swiftly let me pass
Across the fields that felt her feet
In the old time that was!

III

A year ago, but one brief year,
O happy flowering land,
We wandered here and whispered there
And hand was warm in hand.

IV

O crisp white clouds beyond the hill,
O lavrock in the skies,
Why do ye all remember still
Her bright uplifted eyes?

V

Red heather on the windy moor,
Wild thyme beside the way,
White jasmine by the cottage door,
Harden your hearts to-day.

VI

Smile not so kind, smile not so kind,
Thou happy, haunted place,
Or thou wilt strike these poor eyes blind
With her remembered face.

ON A RAILWAY PLATFORM

A DRIZZLE of drifting rain

And a blurred white lamp o'er head,
That shines as my love will shine again,
In the world of the dead.

Round me the wet black night,

And, afar in the limitless gloom,
Crimson and green, two blossoms of light,
Two stars of doom.

But the night of death is a-flare

With a torch of back-blown fire
And the coal-black deeps of the quivering air
Rend for my soul's desire.

Leap, heart, for the pulse and the roar

And the lights of the streaming train

That leaps with the heart of thy love once more
Out of the mist and the rain ;

For the thousand panes of light
And the faces pale with mist
Streaming out of the desolate night
In ruby and amethyst ;

Out of the desolate years
The thundering pageant flows ;
But I see no more than a window of tears
Which her face has turned to a rose.

AN OLD SONG ENDED

How should I your true love know

From another one? —

By his cockle-hat and staff

And his sandal shoon. —

Wherefore hath he roamed so far,

Lady, from your hand? —

Love's a pilgrim, and he comes

Out of Holy Land. —

Nay; but he is dead, lady,

He is dead and gone: —

Seek his grave and lay your face

Down upon the stone. —

Shall I find him if he sleep

In a nameless grave

Where over many and many an one
The tall wet grasses wave? —

Breathe my name whereas you go.

If you hear a sound
Struggling like a stifled cry
Underneath the ground,

Whisper but a word to him,
Tell him my despair:
If he riseth from the dead,
Then my love is there.

LOVE'S GHOST

I

Thy house is dark and still: I stand once more
Beside the marble door.
It opens as of old! Thy pale, pale face
Peers thro' the narrow space.
Thy hands are mine, thy hands are mine to hold,
Just as of old.

II

'Hush! hush! or God will hear us! Ah, speak
low
As Love spake long ago.'
'Sweet, sweet, are these thine arms, thy breast,
thy hair
Assuaging my despair,
Assuaging the long thirst, quenching the tears
Of all these years?

III

'Thy house is deep and still: God cannot hear;

Sweet, have no fear!

Are not thy cold lips crushed against my kiss?

Love gives us this,

Not God'; but 'Ah,' she moans, 'God hears us!

Speak,

Speak low, hide cheek on cheek.'

IV

O, then what eager whisperings, hoarded long,

Too sweet for any song,

What treasured news to tell, what hopes, what

fears,

Gleaned from the barren years,

What raptures wrung from out the heart of pain,

What wild farewells again.

V

Whose pity is this? Ah, quick, one kiss!

Once more

■

Closes the marble door!

I grope here in the darkness all alone!

Across the cold white stone,

Over thy tomb, a sudden starlight gleams:

Death gave me this — in dreams.

NIOBE

I

How like the sky she bends above her child,
One with the great horizon of her pain!
No sob from our low seas where woe runs wild,
No weeping cloud, no momentary rain,
Can mar the heaven-high visage of her grief,
That frozen anguish, proud, majestic, dumb!
She stoops in pity above the labouring earth,
Knowing how fond, how brief
Is all its hope, past, present and to come,
She stoops in pity, and yearns to assuage
its dearth.

II

Through that fair face the whole dark universe
Speaks, as a thorn-tree speaks thro' one white
flower;

And all those wrenched Promethean souls that
curse

The gods, but cannot die before their hour,
Find utterance in her beauty. That fair head
Bows over all earth's graves. It was her cry
Men heard in Rama when the twisted ways
With children's blood ran red !
Her silence utters all the sea would sigh ;
And, in her face, the whole earth's anguish
prays.

III

It is the pity, the pity of human love
That strains her face, upturned to meet the
doom,
And her deep bosom, like a snow-white dove
Frozen upon its nest, ne'er to resume
Its happy breathing o'er the golden brace
Whose fostering was her death. Ay, death
alone

Can break the anguished horror of that
spell!

The sorrow on her face
Is sealed; the living flesh is turned to stone:
She knows all, all that Life and Time can
tell.

IV

Ah, yet, her woman's love, so vast, so tender;
Her woman's body, hurt by every dart;
Braving the thunder, still, still hide the slender
Soft frightened child beneath her mighty
heart!

She is all one mute immortal cry, one brief
Infinite pang of such victorious pain
That she transcends the heavens and bows
them down!
The majesty of grief
Is hers, and her dominion must remain
Eternal. God nor man usurps that crown.

THE LAST OF THE TITANS

OVER what seemed a gulf of glimmering sea,
Huger than hugest Himalay arose
Atlas, on weary shoulders heaving dark
The burden of the heavens, the heavy broad
Empurpled floors o' the roseate golden realm
Unseen, where gods like living light in light
Flowed and forgot the sorrows of the world.
And his drooped head was bowed into the gloom,
Bowed like a mountain, crushing on his breast
A clotted beard of many pinewoods. Dark,
Immeasurably dark his body's bulk
Sank through the gulfs of Space; but pale as
 death
His face gleamed over Africa, his face,
A mask of living marble, bending down
Eyes like deep wells of soft compassionate gloom.

His cheeks were furrowed and writhen like
rain-washed crags

With fierce ravines of long and age-long tears
Whereon the pale procession of the stars
That round him moved in mockery sometimes cast
A dreary light of anguish; but sometimes
The white clouds glimmering crept to comfort
him,

And to be comforted, by shutting out
The keen oppression of those glittering ranks
And dread eternities. They crept like sheep
Round some Titanic shepherd. In his breast
They nestled; but whene'er his mighty hands
In love would draw them closer, they escaped,
Eluded the fond clasp,

And, ever drawing nigh him all night long,
Wandered away for ever as they came.
Beneath him, like a tawny panther-skin
The great Sahara slept: beyond it lay,

Parcelled and plotted out like tiny fields,
The pryncedoms and the kingdoms of this earth,
Mountains like frozen wrinkles on a sea,
And seas like rain-pools in a rutted road
Dwindling beneath his loneliness. Above
The chariots of ten thousand thousand suns
Conspired to make him lonelier and rolled
Their flaming wheels remote, so that they seemed,
E'en Alioth and Fomalhaut, no more
Than dust of diamonds in the abysmal gloom.
So from a huger loneliness he gazed
Over the world where, faint as morning mists
Drifting thro' shadowy battles on the hills,
Drifting thro' many a pageant touched with red,
Cities of men and nations passed away.

But once, from out a crimson-glooming dawn,
A light appeared as of a distant star
Flying towards him, growing as it came;

Till now it seemed a naked youth up-borne
On silver dove-winged sandals, like a god.
Then, then as moans the thunder through the
 night,
The heart of Atlas moaned— ‘Why art thou
 come
To look upon my sorrow? Nay, I know,
Perseus, thou son of the everlasting gods,
I know thee who thou art! Why comest thou
 thus
To mock me with the sight of that high hope
Which Atlas never knew? Why comest thou
 thus
In youth and beauty through the crimson dawn?’
And Perseus answered gently as a man
Speaking to one in pain: ‘I did not come
To mock thee, lord: I come to seek and pluck
The heart from out the land without a name,
The land without any order, where the light

Is even as darkness. I would seek and slay
Medusa — her whose foul enchantments draw
Man's heart into the abominable pit
Strangled and' . . . then that other — 'Many

a man,

Yea, many a hero have I seen go by
The glory of whose face was like a god's
Upon that quest; but I have never seen
The face of one returning. Knowest thou not
So terrible is the tempest of her beauty
That if thine eyes but look upon her face
Thy flesh and soul shall stiffen into stone.
Her breasts are girt about with triple brass
Against all mortal steel.' And Perseus — 'Yea,
I know; but she — the brightest queen of
heaven —

Athena, gave me mine immortal sword,
The sword of knowledge that can shear through
brass

And triple steel as lightning cleaves the night.
Athena gave me mine immortal shield,
Theshield of truth: and, mirrored in that gleam,
The face of even Medusa hath no power
To hurt me. I will look not on her face
Save in the shield of truth: I shall not smite her
Save with the sword of knowledge, bathed in
heaven.

I pray thee show me now that bitter road,
My death-road as thou sayest; for I will go
And triumph and return.' And Atlas said
'Yea; if I show thee, Perseus, wilt thou give
One grace if thou return, one gift of grace
To me, world-wearied: I desire to rest.
I am weary of bearing this exceeding weight
Of gloom eternal, weary of searching heaven
With prayers for pity, weary of knowledge,
weary
Of watching little men a little hour

Beneath the pondering of prodigious heavens
Contend like ants for little mole-hill realms
And glow-worm glories, crowns contemptible;
But thou can'st give me peace, if thou return.
Nay, Perseus, I will tell thee when thou comest;
But swear as thou dost love thy fatherland
Thou'lt not deny me this if thou return.'
And Perseus swore that oath with steadfast eyes,
And Atlas pointed out the baleful road
Across the shapeless land without a name.

White as a snow-flake on the weird black wings
Of many a wind fulfilled with hideous dreams,
Misshapen horrors of the ultimate gloom,
He flew, till as they gaped with threatening jaws
Of flame around his path he donned the helm
Wrung from the realms of Pluto, the dark helm
Wrought in the lands of death, which whoso
wears

Is bodiless and invisible as the soul
That hath gone over Lethe. Him no more
Can death affright nor mortal doom affray.

League after league he sped till from the depths,
Up through the darkness came a great soft sound
Of breathing, like the breathing of the sea;
And, shuddering, he upheld the polished shield
And gazed on it as on some magic moon
Wherein he saw the glimmering world below
Mirrored; beheld what none hath ever seen
And lived, since the beginning of the world.
'O, horrible,' he moaned, 'O, beautiful,
Beautiful hell'; for in the shield he saw
Upon what seemed a plain of steaming filth
A Titan woman, lying supine and white;
White as a fallen column of some huge
Temple of Ombos, hugest City of earth,
Her body a field of lilies and her breasts

Two snowy hillocks tipt with crimson dawn;
Her flank a marble buttress beautiful
Couched in the foul abyss; her regal face
Calm with the leonine languor of the Sphinx.
On either side, close huddled to her flank
And in the steam through which she glimmered
pale
A dark shape, indistinguishable bulk
Of horror, couched with laps and folds of skin
Like those that wrap Behemoth; and sometimes,
Like the fierce flashing of a wrecker's fire,
There came a glint of brazen claws and wings.
All round them like a forest swept the deep
Empurpled masses of her tangled hair.
Anon with slow and sleepy crimson lips,
Bright as with blood of heroes, her face turned
Smiling to greet each horror with a kiss;
And, as she turned, her beauty's palace heaved
One rosy marble buttress from the filth

Luxuriously a little, the other sank
And wallowed deeper. Suddenly her eyes
Opened in childlike innocence. The dark
Mass of her hair shook round her like a sea.
Its purple clouds all clotted and congealed!
And lo, the primal serpents of the slime
Huger than Python, hissing, upward curled
And floated round her, coil on heavy coil,
Beautiful in their horror as they cast
Shadows like grape-bloom o'er her breasts' white

snow

And swayed their bloated throats: and then a
voice

From distances beyond the abode of gods
Cried, *This is She, the Abominable, the Queen
Of dissolute chaos, knowing not evil or good,
Queen of all dark adulteries, Mother of shame,
Mother of falsehood, Mother of treachery,
Mother of jealousy, Mother of blood and tears,*

Queen of the ultimate darkness. At that voice
Young Perseus gripped the bright immortal
sword

Which grave grey-eyed Athena gave him, gazed
Steadfastly on the shield and floated down
Quietly as a star-beam into hell.

Then, with one prayer to the everlasting gods,
Across the roseate hollow of her throat
He smote! The immortal blade like light thro'
darkness

Flashed, and the blood rolled hissing o'er the
filth;

And wheresoe'er it curled a serpent rose
Hissing a-gape; then with one hideous clap
Of thunder those two monstrous bulks arose,
Mountainous, like two foul prodigious swine
From out their wallowing beds i' the clinging
mire;

And from what seemed their eyes a ruddy light

Of vengeance flashed, as of wild crimson torches
Far-sunken in a thick and savage wood,
Yet imminent; but Perseus, with one hand
Clutching the tangled gloom of that dire head
Soared upward and the silver sandals bore
The hero and his burden far away.
And though with heavy clang of brazen wings
The Gorgons followed, soon they dropped
 behind
And loomed no larger than two carrion flies
Against the red horizon; and at last
Decayed from sight. And onward Perseus came
Triumphantly, a light upon his face
As of a god returning, till he saw
The mighty shoulders of the world-worn king
Atlas, above what seemed a glimmering sea.
And up to the grim worn face, furrowed with
 tears
He sped, according to his vow; and Atlas

Moaned like a distant thunder, 'Art thou come,
Perseus, thou son of the everlasting gods?
Lift up the head and let me look upon it;
For I desire to rest.' And Perseus raised
The cold head of Medusa, which no man
Had seen and lived; and Atlas looked
With weary hungering eyes upon her face.
And lo, a sleep of stone, an iron rest
And everlasting quiet sealed his eyes.
His cheeks were furrowed and writhen rain-
washed crags,
And his drooped head was bowed into the gloom,
A granite mountain, crushing on its breast
A clotted beard of many pinewoods. Still
Round him the clouds like wandering flocks of
sheep
Around some mighty shepherd creeping close
Nestled against his breast; and all was peace.

THE RIDE OF PHAËTHON

I

FORTH, from the portals, flow the four immortal
steeds

Tossing the splendour of their manes,
While the dazzled Phaëthon reels o'er the flash-
ing golden wheels
Grasping the fourfold reins.

II

Ah, beneath the burning hooves how the dark-
ness cowers down

As the great steeds mount and soar;
How the twilight springs away from the wheels
like spray
And the night like a battle-broken host is
driven before.

III

And swifter now, ah, swift, as the eight great
shoulders lift

And leap up the rolling sky,

And the steeds in whitest glory ramp and trample
on the night

And the quivering haunches thrust, they
mount and fly.

IV

Ah, the beauty of their scorn! How the blood-
red nostrils burn,

Breathing out the dawn and the day;

How the long cloud ranks foam in fury from
their flanks

And the heavens for their hooves make way.

V

And higher now and higher, thro' a sea of cloudy
fire

The chariot sways and swings,

And the heart of Phaëthon leaps, as up the
radiant steeps

They surge, and drunk with triumph, he lifts
his head and sings.

VI

He sings, he sways and reels o'er the flashing
golden wheels,

For he sees far, far below,

The little dwindling earth and the land that gave
him birth

And the Northlands white with snow.

VII

And he shakes the maddened reins o'er the
gleaming seas and plains

And the chariot swings and sways,

Swifter, swifter he would fly than the Master of
the sky,

The Lord of the sunbeams and bays.

VIII

And each high immortal steed that had never
 known the need
 Of Apollo's lash or goad,
 Tossed the cataract of its mane o'er its quivering
 croup again
 And ramped on the sun-bright road.

IX

*Beautiful, insolent, fierce,
 For an instant, a whirlwind of radiance,
 Tossing their manes,
 Rampant over the dazzled universe
 They struggled, while Phaëthon, Phaëthon tugged
 at the reins.*

X

Then, like a torrent, a tempest of splendour, a
 hurricane rapture of wrath and derision
 Down they galloped, a great white thunder of
 glory, down the terrible sky;

Till earth with her rivers and seas and meadows
broadened, and filled up the field of their
vision

And mountains leapt from the plains to meet
them, and all the forests and fields drew nigh.

XI

All the bracken and grass of the mountains
flamed and the valleys of corn were wasted,
All the blossoming forests of Africa withered
and shrivelled beneath their flight;
Then, then first, those ambrosial Edens of old by
the wheels of the Sun were blasted,
Leaving a dread Sahara, lonely, burnt and
blackened to greet the night.

XII

Upward they swerved and swooped once more,
the great white steeds, outstretched at the
gallop,

The round earth dwindled beneath their
flight, the mighty chariot swayed and
swung

Under the feet of the charioteer, it swung and
swayed as a storm-swept shallop
Tosses and leaps in the seas, and Phaëthon,
cowering, close to the sides of it clung.

XIII

For now to the stars, to the stars, they surged,
and the earth was a dwindling gleam there-
under,
Yea, now to the home of the Father of gods,
and he rose in the wrath that none can quell,
Beholding the mortal charioteer, and the rolling
heavens were rent with his thunder,
And Phaëthon, smitten, reeled from the
chariot! Backward and out of it, headlong
he fell.

XIV

Down, down, down, down from the glittering
heights of the firmament hurled
Like a falling star, in a circle of fire, down the
sheer abysm of doom,
Down to the hiss and the heave of the seas far
out on the ultimate verge of the world,
That leapt with a roar to meet him, he fell,
and they covered him o'er with their glori-
ous gloom,
Covered him deep with their rolling gloom,
Their depths of pitiful gloom.

THE EMPIRE-BUILDERS

Who are the Empire-builders? They
Whose desperate arrogance demands
A self-reflecting power to sway
A hundred little selfless lands?
Lord God of battles, ere we bow
To these and to their soulless lust,
Let fall thy thunders on us now
And strike us equal to the dust.

Before the stars in heaven were made
Our great Commander led us forth;
And now the embattled lines are laid
To East, to West, to South, to North;
According as of old He planned
We take our station in the field,

Nor dare to dream we understand
The splendour of the swords we wield.

We know not what the Soul intends
That lives and moves behind our deeds;
We wheel and march to glorious ends
Beyond the common soldier's needs:
And some are raised to high rewards,
And some by regiments are hurled
To die upon the opposing swords
And sleep — forgotten by the world.

And not where navies churn the foam,
Nor called to fields of fierce emprise,
In many a country cottage-home.

The Empire-builder lives and dies:
Or through the roaring street he goes
A lean and weary City slave
The conqueror of a thousand foes
Who walks, unheeded, to his grave.

Leaders unknown of hopes forlorn
Go past us in the daily mart,
With many a shadowy crown of thorn
And many a kingly broken heart:
Though England's banner overhead
Ever the secret signal flew,
We only see its Cross is red
As children see the skies are blue.

For all are Empire-builders here,
Whose hearts are true to heaven and home
And, year by slow revolving year,
Fulfil the duties as they come;
So simple seems the task, and yet
Many for this are crucified;
Ay, and their brother-men forget
The simple wounds in palm and side.

For hearts that to their home are true
Where'er the tides of power may flow,

Have built a kingdom great and new
Which Time nor Fate shall overthrow;
These are the Empire-builders, these
Annex where none shall say them nay,
Beyond the world's uncharted seas,
Realms that can never pass away.

NELSON'S YEAR — 1905

I

'New Year, be good to England!'

This year, a hundred years ago,
The world attended, breathless, on the gathering
pomp of war,

While England and her deathless dead,
with all their mighty hearts aglow,
Swept onward like the dawn of doom to triumph
at Trafalgar;

Then the world was hushed to wonder
As the cannon's dying thunder
Broke out again in muffled peals across the
heaving sea,

And home the Victor came at last,
Home, home, with England's flag half-
mast,

That never dipped to foe before, on Nelson's
Victory.

II

God gave this year to England;
And what God gives He takes again;
God gives us life, God gives us death: our
victories have wings.
He gives us love and in its heart He hides
the whole world's heart of pain!
We gain by loss: impartially the eternal balance
swings!
Ay; in the fire we cherish
Our thoughts and dreams may perish;
Yet shall it burn for England's sake triumphant
as of old!
What sacrifice could gain for her
Our own shall still maintain for her
And hold the gates of freedom wide that take no
keys of gold.

III

God gave this year to England;
Her eyes are far too bright for tears
Of sorrow; by her silent dead she kneels, too
proud for pride;
Their blood, their love, have bought her
right to claim the new imperial years
In England's name for Freedom, in whose love
her children died;
In whose love, though hope may dwindle,
Love and brotherhood shall kindle
Between the striving nations as a choral song
takes fire,
Till new hope, new faith, new wonder
Cleave the clouds of doubt asunder,
And speed the union of mankind in one divine
desire.

IV

Hasten the Kingdom, England;
This year across the listening world

There came a sound of mingled tears where
victory and defeat
Clasped hands; and Peace — among the
dead — stood wistfully, with white
wings furled,
Knowing the strife was idle; for the night and
morning meet,
Yet there is no disunion
In heaven's divine communion
As through the gates of twilight the harmonious
morning pours;
Ah, God speed that grander morrow
When the world's divinest sorrow
Shall show how Love stands knocking at the
world's unopened doors.

v

Hasten the Kingdom, England!

Look up across the narrow seas,

g

Across the great white nations to thy dark
imperial throne

Where now three hundred million souls
attend on thine august decrees

Ah, bow thine head in humbleness, the Kingdom
is thine own:

Not for the pride or power

God gave thee this in dower;

But, now the West and East have met and wept
their mortal loss,

Now that their tears have spoken

And the long dumb spell is broken,

Is it nothing that thy banner bears the red
eternal cross?

VI

Ay! Lift the flag of England;

And lo, that Eastern cross is there,

Veiled with a hundred meanings as our English
eyes are veiled;

Yet to the grander dawn we move obli-
vious of the sign we bear,
Oblivious of the heights we climb until the last
is scaled ;
Then with all the earth before us
And the great cross floating o'er us
We shall break the sword we forged of old, so
weak we were and blind ;
While the inviolate heaven discloses
England's Rose of all the roses
Dawning wide and ever wider o'er the kingdom
of mankind.

VII

Hasten the Kingdom, England ;
For then all nations shall be one ;
One as the ordered stars are one that sing upon
their way,
One with the rhythmic glories of the swing-
ing sea and the rolling sun,

One with the flow of life and death, the tides of
night and day;
One with all dreams of beauty,
One with all laws of duty;
One with the weak and helpless while the one
sky burns above;
Till eyes by tears made glorious
Look up at last victorious
And lips that starved break open in one song of
life and love.

VIII

'New Year, be good to England;'
And when the Spring returns again
Rekindle in our English hearts the universal
Spring,
That we may wait in faith upon the former
and the latter rain,
Till all waste places burgeon and the wildernesses
sing;

Pour the glory of thy pity
Through the dark and troubled city;
Pour the splendour of thy beauty over wood and
meadow fair;
May the God of battles guide thee
And the Christ-child walk beside thee
With a word of peace for England in the dawn
of Nelson's Year.

IN TIME OF WAR

I

TO-NIGHT o'er Bagshot heath the purple heather
Rolls like dumb thunder to the splendid West;
And mighty ragged clouds are massed together
Above the scarred old common's broken
breast;

And there are hints of blood between the
boulders,
Red glints of fiercer blossom, bright and bold;
And round the shaggy mounds and sullen shoulders
The gorse repays the sun with savage gold.

And now, as in the West the light grows holy,
And all the hollows of the heath grow dim,

Far off, a sulky rumble rolls up slowly
Where guns at practice growl their evening
hymn.

And here and there in bare clean yellow spaces
The print of horse-hoofs like an answering cry
Strikes strangely on the sense from lonely places
Where there is nought but empty heath and
sky.

The print of warlike hoofs, where now no figure
Of horse or man along the sky's red rim
Breaks on the low horizon's rough black rigour
To make the gorgeous waste less wild and
grim;

Strangely the hoof-prints strike, a Crusoe's
wonder,
Framed with sharp furze amongst the footless
fells

A menace and a mystery, rapt asunder,
As if the whole wide world contained nought
else, —

Nought but the grand despair of desolation
Between us and that wild, how far, how near,
Where, clothed with thunder, nation grapples
nation,
And Slaughter grips the clay-cold hand of
Fear.

II

And far above the purple heath the sunset stars
awaken,
And ghostly hosts of cloud across the West
begin to stream,
And all the low soft winds with muffled cannon-
ades are shaken,
And all the blood-red blossom draws aloof
into a dream:

A dream — no more — and round the dream the
clouds are curled together;

A dream of two great stormy hosts embat-
tled in the sky;

For there against the low red heavens each
purple clump of heather

Becomes a serried host of spears around a
battle-cry;

Becomes the distant battle-field or brings the
dream so near it

That, almost, as the purple smoke around
them reels and swims,

A thousand grey-lipped faces flash — ah, hark,
the heart can hear it —

The sharp command, the clash of steel, the
sudden sough of limbs.

And through the purple thunders there are silent
shadows creeping

With murderous gleams of light, and then —
a mighty leaping roar
Where foe and foe are met; and then — a long
low sound of weeping
As Death laughs out from sea to sea, another
fight is o'er.

Another fight — but ah, how much is over?
Night descending
Draws o'er the scene her ghastly moon-shot
veil with piteous hands;
But all around the bivouac-glare the shadowy
pickets wending
See sights, hear sounds that only war's own
madness understands.

No circle of the accursed dead where dreaming
Dante wandered,
No city of death's eternal dole could match
this mortal world

Where men, before the living soul and quivering
flesh are sundered,
Through all the bestial shapes of pain to one
wide grave are hurled.

But in the midst for those who dare beyond the
fringe to enter
Be sure one kingly figure lies with pale and
blood-soiled face,
And round his brows a ragged crown of thorns;
and in the centre
Of those pale folded hands and feet the sigil
of his grace.

See, how the pale limbs, marred and scarred in
love's lost battle, languish;
See how the splendid passion still smiles
quietly from his eyes;
Come, come and see a king indeed, who triumphs
in his anguish,

Who conquers here in utter loss beneath the
eternal skies.

For unto lips so deadly calm what answer shall
be given?

Oh pale, pale king so deadly still beneath the
unshaken stars,

Who shall deny thy kingdom here, though
heaven and earth were riven

With the last roar of onset in the world's
intestine wars?

All round him reeks the obscene red hell — the
scream of haggled horses,

The curse, the moan, the tossing arms, the
hideous twisted forms,

Where, as the surgeons call up life's last pitiful
resources,

The darkness heaves around them like a mass
of mangled worms.

'Life, doctor, life!' 'Be wise; you'd better
die: 'twill soon be over,' —

The blackened trunk drops guttering back, the
mouth is dumb again:

'What use were life to you, my lad? she wouldn't
know her lover,
And cruelty here is pity's best — to put you
out of pain.'

And far away in lonely homes the lamp of hope
is burning,

All night the white-faced women wait with
aching eyes of prayer,

All night the little children dream of father's
glad returning;

All night he lies beneath the stars and —
dreams no more out there.

Only the senseless clay-cold hand may clasp
some crumpled letter, —

A lantern — see — the big round scrawl, the
child's long-studied phrase:

'When Dadda comes again . . . his girl will try
so much much better:

She'll be much taller, too; and much more
grown up in her ways.'

The laugh is Death's; he laughs as erst o'er
hours that England cherished,

'Count up, count up the stricken homes that
wail the first-born son,

Count by your starved and fatherless the tale
of what hath perished;

Then gather with your foes and ask if you —
or I — have won.'

III

O'er Bagshot heath it rolls, the old old story, —

The great moon dawns; the sunset dies
away;

Year strengthens year as glory kindles glory
From its own sad procession of decay.

When shall the sun-dawn of the perfect nation,
Rise pure and white above the blood-red sea;
When shall war die and by death's new creation
Begin the long-sought world-wide harmony?

Nearer, still nearer creeps the light we hope for,
Yet still eludes our war-worn aching eyes:
Nearer, still nearer, steals the truth we grope for,
Yet, as we think to grasp it, fades and flies.

The world rolls on; and love and peace are mated:
Still on the breast of England, like a star,
The blood-red lonely heath blows, consecrated,
A brooding practice-ground for blood-red war.

Yet is there nothing out of tune with Nature
There, where the skylark showers his earliest
song,

Where sun and wind have moulded every feature,
And one world-music bears each note along.

There many a brown-winged kestrel swoops or
hovers

In poised and patient quest of his own prey;
And there are fern-clad glens where happy lovers
May kiss the murmuring summer noon away.

There, as the primal earth was — all is glorious
Perfect and wise and wonderful in view
Of that great heaven through which we rise
victorious

O'er all that strife and change and death can
do.

No nation yet has risen o'er earth's first nature;
Though love illumed each individual mind,
Still, like some dark half-formed primeval
creature

The fierce mob crawled a thousand years be-
hind.

Still on the standards of the great World-Powers
Lion and bear and eagle sullenly brood,
Whether the slow folds flap o'er halcyon hours
Or stream tempestuously o'er fields of blood.

By war's red evolution we have risen
Far, since fierce Erda chose her conquering
few,
And out of Death's red gates and Time's grey
prison
They burst, elect from battle, tried and true,
Tempered like sword-blades; but life's vast
procession
Has passed beyond the help of war's wild day,
The day where now a world in retrogression
Goes hurrying down the broad and hopeless
way.

For now Death mocks at youth and love and
glory,

Chivalry slinks behind his loaded mines,
With meaner murderous lips War tells her story,
And round her cunning brows no laurel shines.

And here to us the eternal charge is given
To rise and make our low world touch God's
high:
To hasten God's own kingdom, Man's own
heaven,
And teach Love's grander army how to die.

No kingdom then, no long-continuing city
Shall e'er again be stablished by the sword;
No blood-bought throne defy the powers of pity,
No despot's crown outweigh one helot's word.

Imperial England, breathe thy marching orders:
The great host waits; the end, the end is close,
When earth shall know thy peace in all her
borders,
And all her deserts blossom with thy Rose.

Princedom and peoples rise and flash and perish
As the dew passes from the flowering thorn;
Yet the one Kingdom that our dreams still
cherish
Lives in a light that blinds the world's red
morn.

Hasten the Kingdom, England, the days darken;
We would not have thee slacken watch or
ward,
Nor doff thine armour till the whole world
hearken,
Nor till Time bid thee lay aside the sword.

Hasten the Kingdom; hamlet, heath, and city,
We are all at war, one bleeding bulk of pain;
Little we know; but one thing—by God's pity—
We know, and know all else on earth is vain.

We know not yet how much we dare, how little;
We dare not dream of peace; yet, as at need,

England, God help thee, let no jot or tittle
Of Love's last law go past thee without heed.

Who saves his life shall lose it! The great ages
Bear witness — Rome and Babylon and Tyre
Cry from the dust-stopped lips of all their sages,
There is no hope if man can climb no higher.

England, by God's grace set apart to ponder
A little while from battle, ah, take heed,
Keep watch, keep watch, beside thy sleeping
thunder;
Call down Christ's pity while those others
bleed;

Waken the God within thee, while the sorrow
Of battle surges round a distant shore,
While Time is thine, lest on some deadly mor-
row
The moving finger write — *but thine no more.*

Little we know — but though the advancing
æons

Win every painful step by blood and fire,
Though tortured mouths must chant the world's
great pæans,
And martyred souls proclaim the world's de-
sire;

Though war be nature's engine of rejection,
Soon, soon, across her universal verge
The great surviving host of Time's election
Shall into God's diviner light emerge.

Hasten the Kingdom, England, queen and
mother;

Little we know of all Time's works and ways;
Yet this, this, this is sure: we need none
other

Knowledge or wisdom, hope or aim or praise,

But to keep this one stormy banner flying

In this one faith that none shall e'er dis-
prove,

Then drive the embattled world before thee,
crying,

There is one Emperor, whose name is Love.

TO ENGLAND IN 1907

(A PRAYER THAT SHE MIGHT SPEAK FOR PEACE)

I

Now is thy foot set on the splendid way!
Hold this hour fast, though yet the skies be grey:
Lift up thy voice to greet the perfect day,
Speak, England, speak across the trembling
sea.

II

E'en now the grandest dawn that ever rose
Is flooding heaven with glory: the light grows
White as a star where thy keen helmet glows
Fronting the morn that sets all nations free.

III

Speak, from thine island throne! Here, in thy
Gate,
Now, for thy voice alone, the nations wait:

Speak, with the heart that made and keeps thee
 great,
Speak the great word of peace from sea to sea.

IV

The nations wait, scarce knowing what they
 need:
Cold cunning claims their ears for lust and greed !
The poor and weak, with struggling hands that
 bleed
Pray to thee now that thou wilt set them free.

V

Thou that hast dared so many a thunder-blast
Is all thy vaunted empery so soon past ?
First of the first, art thou afraid at last
 To hold thy hands out first across the sea ?

VI

Not for such fears God gave thee thy rich dower,
The sea-wrought sceptre and the imperial power !

Ages have poured their blood for this one hour
That thou might'st speak and set the whole
world free.

VII

The poor and weak uplift their manacled hands
To thee, our Mother, our Lady and Queen of
lands:
Anguished in prayer before thy footstool stands
Peace, with her white wings glimmering o'er
the sea.

VIII

Others may shrink whose naked frontiers face
A million foemen of an alien race;
But thou, Imperial, by thy pride of place,
O, canst thou falter or fear to set them free?

IX

Thou, thou alone canst speak; thou, thou alone,
From the sure citadel of thy rock-bound throne:

Trust thy strong heart; thine island is thine own,
Girt with the thunder and lightning of the sea.

X

Fools prate of pride where butchered legions fall;
Peace has one battle sterner than them all,
(England, on thee our ringing trumpets call!)
One battle that shall set the whole world free.

XI

Speak, speak and act! The sceptre is in thine
hand;
Proclaim the reign of love from land to land;
Then, come the world against thee, thou shalt
stand!
Speak, with the world-wide voice of thine own
sea.

IN CLOAK OF GREY

I

Love's a pilgrim, cloaked in grey,
And his feet are pierced and bleeding;
Have ye seen him pass this way
Sorrowfully pleading?
Ye that weep the world away
Have ye seen King Love to-day?

II

Yea, we saw him; but he came
Poppy-crowned and white of limb,
Song had touched his lips to flame,
And his eyes were drowsed and dim;
And we kissed the hours away
Till night grew rosier than the day.

III

Hath he left you? — Yea, he left us
A little while ago;
Of his laughter quite bereft us
And his limbs of snow:
We know not why he went away,
Who ruled our revels yesterday!—

IV

Because ye did not understand
Love cometh from afar,
A pilgrim out of Holy Land,
Guided by a star;
Last night he came in cloak of grey
Begging! Ye knew him not! He went his way.

A RIDE FOR THE QUEEN

QUEEN of queens, oh lady mine,

You who say you love me,

Here's a cup of crimson wine

To the stars above me;

Here's a cup of blood and gall

For a soldier's quaffing!

What's the prize to crown it all?

Death? I'll take it laughing!

I ride for the Queen to-night!

Though I find no knightly fee

Waiting on my lealty,

High upon the gallows-tree

Faithful to my fealty,

What had I but love and youth,

Hope and fame in season?

She has proved that more than truth
Glorifies her treason!

Would that other do as much?

Ah, but if in sorrow
Some forgotten look or touch
Pierce her heart to-morrow,
She might love me yet, I think;
So her lie befriends me,
Though I know there's darker drink
Down the road she sends me.

Ay, one more great chance is mine!

(Can I faint or falter?)

She shall pour my blood like wine,
Make my heart her altar,
Burn it to the dust! For, there,
What if o'er the embers
She should stoop and — I should hear —
'Hush! Thy love remembers!'

One more chance for every word
Whispered to betray me,
While she buckled on my sword,
Smiling to allay me;
One more chance; ah, let me not
Mar her perfect pleasure;
Love shall pay me, jot by jot,
Measure for her measure.

Faith shall think I never knew,
I will be so fervent!
Doubt shall dream I dreamed her true,
As her war-worn servant!
Whoso flouts her spotless name
(Love, I wear thy token!)
He shall face one sword of flame
Ere the lie be spoken!

God, the world is white with May,
(Fragrant as her bosom!)

Could I find a sweeter way
Through the year's young blossom,
Where her warm red mouth on mine
Woke my soul's desire?
Hey! The cup of crimson wine,
Blood and gall and fire!

Castle Doom or Gates of Death?
(Smile again for pity!)

'Boot and horse,' my lady saith,
'Spur against the City,
Bear this message!' God and she
Still forget the guerdon;
Nay, the rope is on the tree!
That shall bear the burden!
I ride for the Queen to-night!

SONG

I

WHEN that I loved a maiden
My heaven was in her eyes,
And when they bent above me
I knew no deeper skies;
But when her heart forsook me,
My spirit broke its bars,
For grief beyond the sunset
And love beyond the stars.

II

When that I loved a maiden,
She seemed the world to me:
Now is my soul the universe,
My dreams — the sky and sea!

There bends no heaven above me,
No glory binds or bars
My grief beyond the sunset,
My love beyond the stars.

III

When that I loved a maiden,
I worshipped where she trod;
But, when she clove my heart, the cleft
Set free the imprisoned god;
Then was I King of all the world!
My soul had burst its bars
For grief beyond the sunset
And love beyond the stars.

EVE'S APPLE

I

WHEN you leant thro' the leaves with your slow
red smile and your ivory body bare,
Ah, what was the fruit you gathered that day,
white Eve with the dusky hair?
For we took it and ate it together and laughed!
Your white teeth bit to the core.
There was little to leave for the doves to peck,
when our delicate feast was o'er.

II

The ripe fruit breathed of kisses, you said, as
your breasts' white apples may;
But your body was cold from the coils of the
snake when you came to my arms that day:

There was blood, red blood on our lips, white
Eve, as we nibbled away in the sun;
But I knew that the fruit was my heart, white
Eve,
The red rent core of my heart, white Eve,
Which we gnawed and left for the rats, white
Eve, when our delicate feast was done.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A SONG

I

'*Come to me in my dreams!*' — how oft
With eyes how kind and voice how soft,
I heard thee sing, at fall of day,
The scholar poet's tenderest lay.

* * * * *

II

But oh, come not to me; for then
The dear dead love will stir again;
And when the cold light bids me wake
With each new day my heart will break.

III

Come not in dreams; how could I bear
Once more to feel thy love so near,
And dream it true, yet inly know
What bitter treachery lurked below?

IV

Come not, as thou *will* come, despite
All prayers, in watches of the night,
With eyes made bright by foolish tears
And fleeting gleams of happier years.

V

Come not, as thou hast come of old,
To flood a sunless world with gold,
Or, with the mockery of a smile,
Cheat me to dream thee kind awhile.

VI

Come not, as thou so oft didst come,
When sorrow made me blind and dumb,
To lay false lips on mine and say
'Sweet love can never pass away.'

VII

*Come not in dreams to me; for then
The dear dead love will stir again;
And, when the cold light bids me wake,
With each new day my heart will break.*

E TENEBRIS

I

INTO the keeping of death
I commend my love,
Into the gloom of the grave
And the lasting sleep!
Yet there is hope, one saith,
In some glory above,
For the broken, the broken wave
That is lost in the deep.

II

O, I know not their meaning at all,
They speak idly to me,
Who say that the lost things return
As day followeth night!

I watch the leaves fall
And waves break on the sea,
And the strange skies that burn
With the stranger day's light.

III

Shall I care if another day greet me
In crimson and gold,
Though the skies be still blue
When the eyes that were kind
Flash no longer to meet me
As of old, as of old,
With a love that was true,
Or a dream that was blind?

IV

I have no hope, no faith,
No desire any more,
That the last year's flower
Should return to the spray:

'Spring cometh, spring cometh,' one saith;

But who shall restore

Just the one perished hour

Of that one perished May?

SONNET

LOVE, when the great hour knelled for thee and
me,

The great hour that should prove thee false
or true,

When life surged round us like a wintry sea
And thy heart feared to say what both hearts
knew;

When all thy vows and honeyed words were
proven

False to the core of thy poor treacherous heart;

When by God's fire my heart's false heaven was
cloven

And, white and dumb, our torn souls turned
to part;

O, never think — for all the flash and thunder
That showed us the dead body at our feet,

Though heaven and hell conspired our souls to
sunder

And though we twain in hell nor heaven shall
meet,

Think not, where'er Love's clay-wrought idols
lie,

The Love to which I prayed through these can
die.

THE REAL DANTE

I

O LOVE, Love, Love, Death robbed me unaware,
Undreaming that we ne'er should meet again,
Else had one soul's infinity of pain
Moated thee round with waves for Hell to dare.
Yea, in that fight, even now, might I but share,
Poor craven I, who yet on earth remain,
Heaven, heaven itself should menace us in vain,
Thy heart on mine, my lips upon thine hair.

I have lost courage, Love, in losing thee,
Courage to bear this wonder of the sky,
Courage to front that dark Eternity,
Courage to brook life's pitiful riddle — *Why,*
Why hath God hurt us thus? Poor broken cry
Quivering, unanswered, o'er the world's wide
sea!

II

And thou art sleeping on that silent shore!
And thou can'st never, never, once return!
Not though the starved heart strain to thee
and yearn,
And the lame hands reach upward and implore,
And the wrenched lips reiterate, o'er and o'er,
One thought wherewith the pitiless planets
burn,
One lesson life is all too short to learn,
One simple sob of the soul — *No more, no more!*

My life shall never learn it! Come thou back,
O, give the lie to all this dust hath said!
Come, let the stars retrace their shining track,
Steal from that solemn midnight of the dead!
Though as a dream thou canst but pass me by,
Come, give my heart the strength to break and
die.

A PRAYER

ONLY a little, O Father, only to rest
Or ever the night come and the Eternal sleep,
Only to rest for a little, a little to weep
In the dead love's pitiful arms, on the dead
love's breast,

A little to loosen the frozen fountains, to free
Rivers of blood and tears that should slacken
the pulse
Of this pitiless heart and appease these pangs
that convulse
Body and soul! O, out of Eternity,

A moment to whisper, only a moment to tell
My dead, my dead, what words are so helpless
to say —

The dreams unuttered, the prayers no passion
could pray —

And then, the eternal sleep or the pains of hell,

I could welcome them, Father, O gladly as ever
a child

Laying his head on the pillow might turn to
his rest

And remember in dreams, as the hand of the
mother is prest

On his hair, how the Pitiful blessed him of old
and smiled.

OLD JAPAN AT EARL'S COURT

I

OF old Japan — how far away! —
We dreamed — how long ago! —
We saw by twisted creek and bay
The blue plum-blossoms blow,
And dragons coiling down below
Like dragons on a fan,
And pig-tailed sailors lurching slow
Thro' streets of old Japan.

II

Who knows that land — that dim blue day
Where white tea-roses grow?
Only a penny all the way
They cry in Pimlico:

The busses rumble to and fro,
Ah, catch one if you can,
And see the paper-lanterns glow
Thro' streets of old Japan.

III

What need we more than youth and May
To make our Miyako?
A chuckle from the cherry spray
A cherub's mocking crow,
A sudden twang, a sweet swift throe
As Daisy trips by Dan,
And careless Cupid drops his bow
And laughs — from old Japan.

IV

*And there the cherry bough shall sway
The peach-bloom shed its snow,
With scents and petals strewn astray
Till night be sweet enow:*

180 **OLD JAPAN AT EARL'S COURT**

Then lovers wander, whispering low

As lovers only can

Where rosy paper lanterns glow

Through streets of old Japan.

OXFORD REVISITED

Timid and strange, like a ghost, I pass the familiar portals,

Echoing now like a tomb, they accept me no more as of old ;

Yet I go wistfully onward, a shade thro' a kingdom of mortals

Wanting a face to greet me, a hand to grasp and to hold.

Hardly I know as I go if the beautiful City is only Mocking me under the moon, with its streams and its willows agleam,

Whether the City of friends or I that am friendless and lonely,

Whether the boys that go by or the time-worn towers be the dream ;

Whether the walls that I know, or the unknown
fugitive faces,
Faces like those that I loved, faces that haunt
and waylay,
Faces so like and unlike, in the dim unforgettable
places,
Startling the heart into sickness that aches
with the sweet of the May, —

Whether all these or the world with its wars be
the wandering shadows !
Ah, sweet over green-gloomed waters the may
hangs, crimson and white;
And quiet canoes creep down by the warm gold
dusk of the meadows
Lapping with little splashes and ripples of
silvery light.

Others like me have returned : I shall see the old
faces to-morrow,

Down by the gay-coloured barges, alert for
the throb of the oars,
Wanting to row once again, or tenderly jesting
with sorrow
Up the old stairways and noting the strange
new names on the doors.

Is it a dream? And I know not nor care if there
be an awaking
Ever at all any more, for the years that have
torn us apart,
Few, so few as they are, will ever be rending and
breaking:
Sooner by far than I knew have they wrought
this change for my heart!

Well; I grow used to it now! Could the dream
but remain and for ever,
With the flowers round the grey quadrangle
laughing as time grows old!

For the waters go down to the sea, but the sky
still gleams on the river !

We plucked them — but there shall be lilies,
ivory lilies and gold.

And still, in the beautiful City, the river of life is
no duller,

Only a little strange as the eighth hour dreamily
chimes,

In the City of friends and echoes, ribbons and
music and colour,

Lilac and blossoming chestnut, willows and
whispering limes.

Over the Radcliffe Dome the moon as the ghost
of a flower

Weary and white awakes in the phantom fields
of the sky :

The trustful shepherded clouds are asleep over
steeple and tower,

Dark under Magdalen walls the Cher like a
dream goes by.

Back, we come wandering back, poor ghosts, to
the home that one misses
Out in the shelterless world, the world that
was heaven to us then,
Back from the coil and the vastness, the stars
and the boundless abysses,
Like monks from a pilgrimage stealing in bliss
to their cloisters again.

City of dreams that we lost, accept now the gift
we inherit —
Love, such a love as we knew not of old in the
blaze of our noon,
We that have found thee at last, half City, half
heavenly Spirit,
While over a mist of spires the sunset mellows
the moon.

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES

I

No more, proud singers, boast no more!
Your high immortal throne
Will scarce outlast a king's!
Time is a sea that hath no shore
Wherein Death idly flings
Your fame like some small pebble-stone
That sinks to rise no more.

*Then boast no more, proud singers,
Your high immortal throne!*

II

This earth, this little grain of dust,
Drifting among the stars,
With her invisible wars,
Her love, her hate, her lust,

This microscopic ball
Whereof you scan a part so small
Outlasts but little even your own poor dust.

*Then boast no more, proud singers,
Your high immortal throne!*

III

That golden spark of light must die,
Which now you call your sun,
Soon will its race be run
Around its trivial sky:
What hand shall then unroll
Dead Maro's little golden scroll
When earth and sun in one wide charnel lie?

*Boast no more, proud singers!
Your high immortal throne
Will scarce outlast a king's.*

THE TESTIMONY OF ART

As earth, sad earth, thrusts many a gloomy cape
 Into the sea's bright colour and living glee,
 So do we strive to embay that mystery
Which earthly hands must ever let escape;
The Word we seek for is the golden shape
 That shall express the Soul we cannot see,
 A temporal chalice of Eternity
Purple with beating blood of the hallowed grape.

Once was it wine and sacramental bread
 Whereby we knew the power that through
 Him smiled
 When, in one still small utterance, He hurled
The Eternities beneath his feet and said
 With lips, O meek as any little child,
 Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

SONG

I

NYMPHS and naiads, come away,
Love lies dead!
Cover the cast-back golden head,
Cover the lovely limbs with may,
And with fairest boughs of green
And many a rose-wreathed brier spray;
But let no hateful yew be seen
Where Love lies dead.

II

Let not the quean that would not hear
(Love lies dead!)
Or beauty that refused to save
Exult in one dejected tear;

But gather the glory of the year,
The pomp and glory of the year,
The triumphing glory of the year,
 And softly, softly, softly shed
Its light and fragrance round the grave
 Where Love lies dead.

REMEMBRANCE

O UNFORGOTTEN lips, grey haunting eyes,
Soft curving cheeks and heart-remembered
brow,
It is all true, the old love never dies,
And — parted — we must meet for ever now.

We did not think it true! We did not think
Love meant this universal cry of pain,
This crown of thorn, this vinegar to drink,
This lonely crucifixion o'er again.

Yet, through the darkness of the sleepless night,
Your tortured face comes meekly answering
mine;
Dumb, but I know why those mute lips are
white,

Dark, but I know why those dark lashes
shine.

O Love, Love, Love, and what if this should
be
For ever now, through God's Eternity?

UNITY

I

HEART of my heart, the world is young;
Love lies hidden in every rose!
Every song that the skylark sung
Once, we thought, must come to a close:
Now we know the spirit of song,
Song that is merged in the chant of the whole,
Hand in hand as we wander along,
What should we doubt of the years that roll?

II

Heart of my heart, we cannot die!
Love triumphant in flower and tree,
Every life that laughs at the sky
Tells us nothing can cease to be:

One, we are one with a song to-day,
 One with the clover that scents the wold,
One with the Unknown, far away,
 One with the stars, when earth grows old.

III

Heart of my heart, we are one with the wind,
 One with the clouds that are whirled o'er the
 lea,
One in many, O broken and blind,
 One as the waves are at one with the sea!
Ay! when life seems scattered apart,
 Darkens, ends as a tale that is told,
One, we are one, O heart of my heart,
 One still one, while the world grows old.

JOY AND PAIN

BELOVÉD, I could not tame thy wild bright
wings!

Thy flight was like a seabird's down the skies:
I could but catch the brightness of thine
eyes;

And then — the wind that buffets, the spray
that stings

And lashes and blinds a shore that only rings
With the elemental storms bore down my
cries,

And where the clotted foam in fury flies
Thou hadst flown rejoicing in all cruel things.

I know thee now, Belovéd, for thou art come
With blood-stained breast into my fostering
hand!

O weary wings that have come home again,
O beating heart where every song lies dumb,
O wounded bird, at last I understand,
I understand those wild bright eyes of pain.

IN THE COOL OF THE EVENING

I

In the cool of the evening, when the low sweet
whispers waken,
When the labourers turn them homeward,
and the weary have their will,
When the censers of the roses o'er the forest-
aisles are shaken
Is it but the wind that cometh o'er the far
green hill?

II

For they say 'tis but the sunset winds that
wander thro' the heather,
Rustle all the meadow-grass and bend the
dewy fern:

They say 'tis but the winds that bow the reeds
 in prayer together,
And fill the shaken pools with fire along the
 shadowy burn.

III

In the beauty of the twilight, in the Garden
 that He loveth,
They have veiled his lovely vesture with the
 darkness of a name!
Thro' His Garden, thro' His Garden, it is but the
 wind that moveth,
No more! But O the miracle, the miracle is
 the same.

IV

In the cool of the evening, when the sky is an
 old story,
Slowly dying, but remembered, ay, and loved
 with passion still . . .

Hush! . . . the fringes of His garment, in the
fading golden glory
Softly rustling as He cometh o'er the far
green hill.

THE COTTAGE OF THE KINDLY LIGHT

THERE is a valley of fir-woods in the West
That slopes between great mountains to the sea.
Once, at the valley's mouth, a cottage stood :
Its ruins remain, like boulders of a rock,
High on the hill, whose base is white with foam.
To its forsaken garden sometimes come
Lovers, who lean upon its grass-grown gate
And listen to the sea-song far below ;
Or little children, with their baskets, trip
Merrily through the fir-woods and the fern,
And climb the crumbling thistle-empurpled wall
Around the tangled copse, and laugh to find
The hardy straggling raspberries all their own.

Round it the curlews wheel and cry all night ;
And, with no other comfort than the stars

THE COTTAGE OF THE KINDLY LIGHT 151

Can faintly shed from their familiar heights
It has been patient, while the world below
Has hidden itself in darkness and in clouds
Of terror from the landward-rushing storm.
Like a small gleam of quartz in a great rock,
A tiny beacon in the whirling gloom,
It stood and gathered sorrow from the world.

There, many years ago, a woman dwelt,
A sailor's widow with her only son;
And ever as she hugged him to her heart
In those glad days when he was but a child,
Her memories of one black eternal night
When she had watched and waited for the sail
That nevermore returned, filled her with one
Supreme, almost unbreathable, desire
That this her little one, her living bliss,
The last caress incarnate of her love,
Should never leave her side; or, if he left,

152 *THE COTTAGE OF THE KINDLY LIGHT*

Never set forth upon the sea: her flesh
Shuddered as the sea shuddered in the sun
Over the cold grave of her first last love
Even to dream of it; yet she remained
Silent and passive on her sea-washed hill,
Facing the sunset, in that lonely home,
Where everything bore witness to the sea, —
The shells her love had brought from foreign
 lands,
The model ship he built; yet she remained.
For her first kisses lingered in the scent
Of those rough wallflowers round the white-
 washed walls,
And the first flush of love that touched her cheek
Lingered and lived and died and lived again
In the pink thrift that nodded by the gate.
As if these and her outlook o'er the sea
Were nought else but her soul's one atmosphere,
Wherein alone she lived and moved and breathed,

Having no other thought but *This is home,*
My part in God's eternity, she still
Remained. The lad grew; yet her fear was dumb.

The lad grew, and the white foam kissed his feet
Sporting upon, the verge: the green waves
laughed

And smote their hard bright kisses on his lips
As he swam out to meet them: the whole sea,
Like some strange symbol of the spiritual deeps
That hourly lure the soul of man in quest
Of beauty, pleasure, knowledge, summoned him
out,

Out from the old faiths, the old fostering arms
of home,

Called him with strange new voices evermore,
Called him with ringing names of high renown,
With white-armed sirens in its blossoming waves,
And heavenly cities in its westering suns;

154 *THE COTTAGE OF THE KINDLY LIGHT*

Called him; and old adventures filled his heart,
And he forgot, as all of us forget,
The imperishable and infinite desire
Of the vacant arms and bosom that still yearn
For the little vanished children, still, still ache
To keep their children little! He grew wroth
At aught that savoured of such fostering care
As mothers long to lavish, aught that seemed
To rob him of his manhood, his free-will:
And she — she understood and she was dumb.

And so the lad grew up; and he was tall,
Supple, and sunburnt, and a flower of men.
His eyes had caught the blue of sea-washed skies,
And deepened with strange manhood, till, at last,
One eve in May his mother wandered down
The hill to await his coming, wistfully
Wandered, touching with vague and dreaming
hands

THE COTTAGE OF THE KINDLY LIGHT 155

The uncrumpling fronds of fern and budding
roses

As if she thought them but the ghosts of spring.
From far below the golden breezes brought
A mellow music from the village church,
Which o'er the fragrant fir-wood she could see
Pointing a sky-blue spire to heaven: she knew
That music, her most heart-remembered song —

*“Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear,
It is not night if Thou be near!”*

And as the music made her one with all
That soft transfigured world of eventide,
One with the flame that sanctified the West,
One with the golden sabbath of the sea,
One with the sweet responses of the woods,
One with the kneeling mountains, there she saw
In a tangle of ferns and roses and wild light
Shot from the sunset through a glade of fir,

Her boy and some young rival in his arms,
A girl of seventeen summers, dusky-haired,
Grey-eyed, and breasted like a crescent moon,
Lifting her red lips in a dream of love
Up to the red lips of her only son.
Jealousy numbed the mother's lonely soul,
And, sickening at the heart, she stole away.

Yet she said nothing when her boy returned;
And, after supper, she took down the Book,
Her own dead grandsire's massive wedding-gift,
The large-print Bible, like a corner-stone
Hewn from the solemn fabric of his life —
An heirloom for the guidance of his sons
And their sons' sons; and every night her boy
Read it aloud to her — a last fond link
Frayed and nigh snapt already, for she knew
It irked him. And he read, *Abide with us,*
For the day is far spent; and she looked at him

Shyly, furtively. With great tears she gazed
As on a stranger in her child's new face.

At last he told her all — told of his love,
And how he must grow wealthy now and make
A home for his young sweetheart, how he meant
To work upon a neighbour's fishing-boat
Till he could buy one for himself. He ceased;
Far off the sea sighed and a curlew wailed;
A soft breeze brought a puff of wallflower scent
Warm through the casement. He looked up and
smiled

Into his mother's face, and saw the tears
Creep through the gnarled old hands that hid
her eyes.

He saw the star-light glisten on her tears!
He could not understand: her lips were dumb.

Oh, dumb and patient as our Mother Earth
Watching from age to age the silent, swift,

Light-hearted progress of her careless sons
By new-old ways to one unaltering doom,
Through the long nights she waited as of old
Till in the dawn — and coloured like the dawn —
The tawny sails came home across the bar.
And every night she placed a little lamp
In the cottage window, that if e'er he gazed
Homeward by night across the heaving sea
He might be touched to memory. But she said
Nothing. The lamp was like the liquid light
In some dumb creature's eyes, that can but wait
Until its master chance to see its love
And deign to touch its brow.

Now in those days
There went a preacher through the country-side
Filling men's hearts with fire; and out at sea
The sailors sang great hymns to God; and one
Stood up one night, among the gleaming nets
A-stream with silver herring in the moon,

THE COTTAGE OF THE KINDLY LIGHT 159

And pointed to the lamp that burned afar
And said, 'Such is that *Kindly Light* we sing!'
And ever afterwards the widow's house
Was called *The Cottage of the Kindly Light*.

One night there came a storm up from the wild
Atlantic, and a cry of fierce despair
Rang through the fishing village; and brave men
Launched the frail lifeboat through a shawl-clad
crowd

Of weeping women. But, high o'er the storm,
High on the hill one lonely woman stood,
Amongst the thunders and the driving clouds,
Searching, at every world-wide lightning glare,
The sudden miles of white stampeding sea;
Searching for what she knew was lost, ay lost
For ever now; but some strange inward pride
Forbade her to go down and mix with those
Who could cry out their loss upon the quays.

W.S.P.

160 *THE COTTAGE OF THE KINDLY LIGHT*

High on the hill she stood and watched alone,
Confessing nothing, acknowledging nothing,
Without one moan, without one outward prayer,
Buffeted by the scornful universe,
Over the crash of seas that shook the world
She stood, one steadfast fragment of the night;
And the wind kissed her and the weeping rain.

* * * * *

But braver men than those who fought the sea
At dawn tramped up the hill, with aching hearts,
To break her loss to her who knew it all
Far better than the best of them. She stood
Still at her gate and watched them as they came,
Curiously noting in a strange dull dream
The gleaming colours, the little rainbow pools
The dawn made in their rough wet oilskin hats
And wrinkled coats, like patches of the sea.

‘Lost? My boy lost?’ she smiled. ‘Nay, he
will come!’

To-morrow, or the next day, or the next
The Kindly Light will bring him home again.'
And so, whate'er they answered, she would
say —

'The Kindly Light will bring him home again;'
Until, at last, thinking her dazed with grief,
They gently turned and went.

She had not wept.

And ere that week was over, came the girl
Her boy had loved. With tears and a white
face
And garbed in black she came; and when she
neared

The gate, his mother, proud and white with scorn,
Bade her return and put away that garb
Of mourning: and the girl saw, shrinking back,
The boy's own mother wore no sign of grief,
But all in white she stood; and like a flash

The girl thought, 'God, she wears her wedding-
dress!

Her grief has driven her mad!'

And all that year

The widow lit the little Kindly Light

And placed it in the window. All that year

She watched and waited for her boy's return

At dawn from the high hill-top: all that year

She went in white, though through the village
streets

Far, far below, the women went in black;

For all had lost some man; but all that year

She said to her friends and neighbours, 'He will
come;

He is delayed; some ship has picked him up

And borne him out to some far-distant land!

Why should I mourn the living?' And, at
dusk,

As if it were indeed the Kindly Light
Of faith and hope and love, she lit the lamp
And placed it in the window.

The year passed ;
And on an eve in May her boy's love climbed
The hill once more, and as the stars came out
And the dusk gathered round her tenderly,
And the last boats came stealing o'er the bar,
And the immeasurable sea lay bright and bare
And beautiful to all infinity
Beneath the last faint colours of the sun
And the increasing kisses of the moon,
A hymn came on a waft of evening wind
Along the valley from the village church
And thrilled her with a new significance
Unfelt before. It was the hymn they heard
On that sweet night among the rose-lit fern —
Sun of my soul ; and, as she climbed the hill,
She wondered, for she saw no Kindly Light

164 *THE COTTAGE OF THE KINDLY LIGHT*

Glimmering from the window; and she thought,
'Perhaps the madness leaves her.' There the
hymn,

Like one great upward flight of angels, rose
All round her, mingling with the sea's own
voice —

*'Come near and bless us when we wake,
Ere through the world our way we take, —
Till, in the ocean of Thy love,
We lose ourselves in heaven above.'*

And when she passed the pink thrift by the gate,
And the rough wallflowers by the whitewashed
wall,

And entered, she beheld the widow kneeling,
In black, beside the unlit Kindly Light;
And near her dead cold hand upon the floor
A fallen taper, for with her last strength
She had striven to light it and, so failing, died.

THE THREE SHIPS

(To an old tune.)

I

As I went up the mountain side,
The sea below me glittered wide,
And, Eastward, far away, I spied
 On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
The three great ships that take the tide
 On Christmas Day in the morning.

II

Ye have heard the song, how these must ply
From the harbours of home to the ports o' the
 sky!
Do ye dream none knoweth the whither and why
 On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
The three great ships go sailing by
 On Christmas Day in the morning?

III

Yet, as I live, I never knew
That ever a song could ring so true,
Till I saw them break thro' a haze of blue
 On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And the marvellous ancient flags they flew
 On Christmas Day in the morning!

IV

From heights above the belfried town
I saw the sails were patched and brown,
But the flags were aflame with a great renown
 On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
And on every mast was a golden crown
 On Christmas Day in the morning.

V

Most marvellous ancient ships were these!
Were their prows a-plunge to the Chersonese
For the pomp of Rome or the glory of Greece

On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
Were they out on a quest for the Golden Fleece
On Christmas Day in the morning?

VI

And the sun and the wind they told me there
How goodly a load the three ships bear,
For the first is gold and the second is myrrh
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And the third is frankincense most rare
On Christmas Day in the morning.

VII

They have mixed their shrouds with the golden
sky,
They have faded away where the last dreams
die . . .
Ah yet, will ye watch, when the mist lifts high
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
Will ye see three ships come sailing by
On Christmas Day in the morning?

SLUMBER-SONGS OF THE MADONNA

PRELUDE

DANTE saw the great white Rose

Half unclose ;

Dante saw the golden bees

Gathering from its heart of gold

Sweets untold,

Love's most honeyed harmonies.

Dante saw the threefold bow

Strangely glow,

Saw the Rainbow Vision rise,

And the Flame that wore the crown

Bending down

O'er the flowers of Paradise.

Something yet remained, it seems ;

In his dreams

Dante missed — as angels may

In their white and burning bliss —

Some small kiss

Mortals meet with every day.

Italy in splendour faints

'Neath her saints !

O, her great Madonnas, too,

Faces calm as any moon

Glow in June,

Hooded with the night's deep blue !

What remains? I pass and hear

Everywhere,

Ay, or see in silent eyes

Just the song she still would sing

Thus — a-swing

O'er the cradle where He lies.

I

Sleep, little baby, I love thee;
Sleep, little king, I am bending above thee!
How should I know what to sing
Here in my arms as I swing thee to sleep?
Hushaby low,
Rockaby so,
Kings may have wonderful jewels to bring,
Mother has only a kiss for her king!
Why should my singing so make me to weep?
Only I know that I love thee, I love thee,
Love thee, my little one, sleep.

II

Is it a dream? Ah yet, it seems
Not the same as other dreams!
I can but think that angels sang,
When thou wast born, in the starry sky,

And that their golden harps out-rang
While the silver clouds went by !

The morning sun shuts out the stars,
Which are much loftier than the sun;
But, could we burst our prison-bars
And find the Light whence light begun,
The dreams that heralded thy birth
Were truer than the truths of earth;
And, by that far immortal Gleam,
Soul of my soul, I still would dream !

A ring of light was round thy head,
The great-eyed oxen nigh thy bed
Their cold and innocent noses bowed !
Their sweet breath rose like an incense cloud
In the blurred and mystic lanthorn light !

About the middle of the night
The black door blazed like some great star
With a glory from afar,

Or like some mighty chrysolite
Wherein an angel stood with white
Blinding arrowy bladed wings
Before the throne of the King of kings;
And, through it, I could dimly see
A great steed tethered to a tree.

Then, with crimson gems aflame
Through the door the three kings came,
And the black Ethiop unrolled
The richly broidered cloth of gold,
And pourèd forth before thee there
Gold and frankincense and myrrh!

III

See, what a wonderful smile! Does it mean
That my little one knows of my love?
Was it meant for an angel that passed unseen,
And smiled at us both from above?

Does it mean that he knows of the birds and the
flowers

That are waiting to sweeten his childhood's hours,
And the tales I shall tell and the games he will
play,

And the songs we shall sing and the prayers we
shall pray

In his boyhood's May,

He and I, one day ?

IV

All in the warm blue summer weather

We shall laugh and love together :

I shall watch my baby growing,

I shall guide his feet,

When the orange trees are blowing

And the winds are heavy and sweet !

When the orange orchards whiten

I shall see his great eyes brighten

To watch the long-legged camels going
Up the twisted street,
When the orange trees are blowing
And the winds are sweet.

*What does it mean? Indeed, it seems
A dream! Yet not like other dreams!*

We shall walk in pleasant vales,
Listening to the shepherd's song
I shall tell him lovely tales
All day long:

He shall laugh while mother sings
Tales of fishermen and kings.

He shall see them come and go

O'er the wistful sea,
Where rosy oleanders blow
Round blue Lake Galilee,
Kings with fishers' ragged coats
And silver nets across their boats,

Dipping through the starry glow,
With crowns for him and me!

Ah, no;

Crowns for him, not me!

Rockaby so! Indeed, it seems

A dream! yet not like other dreams!

v

Ah, see what a wonderful smile again!

Shall I hide it away in my heart,

To remember one day in a world of pain

When the years have torn us apart,

Little babe,

When the years have torn us apart?

Sleep, my little one, sleep,

Child with the wonderful eyes,

Wild miraculous eyes,

Deep as the skies are deep!

What star-bright glory of tears

176 *SLUMBER-SONGS OF THE MADONNA*

Waits in you now for the years
That shall bid you waken and weep?
Ah, in that day, could I kiss you to sleep
Then, little lips, little eyes,
Little lips that are lovely and wise,
Little lips that are dreadful and wise!

VI

Clenched little hands like crumpled roses
 Dimpled and dear,
Feet like flowers that the dawn uncloses,
 What do I fear?
Little hands, will you ever be clenched in anguish?
White little limbs, will you droop and languish?
 Nay, what do I hear?
I hear a shouting, far away,
You shall ride on a kingly palm-strewn way
 Some day!
But when you are crowned with a golden crown

And throned on a golden throne,
You'll forget the manger of Bethlehem town

And your mother that sits alone
Wondering whether the mighty king
Remembers a song she used to sing,

Long ago,

“*Rockaby so,*

*Kings may have wonderful jewels to bring,
Mother has only a kiss for her king!*” . . .

Ah, see what a wonderful smile, once more!

He opens his great dark eyes!
Little child, little king, nay, hush, it is o'er,
My fear of those deep twin skies, —

Little child,

You are all too dreadful and wise!

VII

But now you are mine, all mine,

And your feet can lie in my hand so small,

178 *SLUMBER-SONGS OF THE MADONNA*

And your tiny hands in my heart can twine,
 And you cannot walk, so you never shall fall,
Or be pierced by the thorns beside the door,
Or the nails that lie upon Joseph's floor;
Through sun and rain, through shadow and shine,
 You are mine, all mine !

THE CALL OF THE SPRING

COME, choose your road and away, my lad,
Come, choose your road and away!
We'll out of the town by the road's bright crown
As it dips to the dazzling day.
It's a long white road for the weary;
But it rolls through the heart of the May.

Though many a road would merrily ring
To the tramp of your marching feet,
All roads are one from the day that's done,
And the miles are swift and sweet,
And the graves of your friends are the mile-stones
To the land where all roads meet.

But the call that you hear this day, my lad,
Is the Spring's old bugle of mirth

When the year's green fire in a soul's desire
Is brought like a rose to the birth;
And knights ride out to adventure
As the flowers break out of the earth.

Over the sweet-smelling mountain-passes
The clouds lie brightly curled;
The wild-flowers cling to the crags and swing
With cataract-dews impearled;
And the way, the way that you choose this day
Is the way to the end of the world.

It rolls from the golden long ago
To the land that we ne'er shall find;
And it's uphill here, but it's downhill there,
For the road is wise and kind,
And all rough places and cheerless faces
Will soon be left behind.

Come, choose your road and away, away,
We'll follow the gypsy sun;

For it's soon, too soon to the end of the day,
And the day is well begun;
And the road rolls on through the heart of the
May
And there's never a May but one.

There's a fir-wood here, and a dog-rose there,
And a note of the mating dove;
And a glimpse, maybe, of the warm blue sea,
And the warm white clouds above;
And warm to your breast in a tenderer nest
Your sweetheart's little glove.

There's not much better to win, my lad,
There's not much better to win!
You have lived, you have loved, you have fought,
you have proved
The worth of folly and sin;
So now come out of the City's rout,
Come out of the dust and the din.

Come out, — a bundle and stick is all
 You'll need to carry along,
If your heart can carry a kindly word,
 And your lips can carry a song;
You may leave the lave to the keep o' the grave,
 If your lips can carry a song!

*Come, choose your road and away, my lad,
 Come, choose your road and away!
We'll out of the town by the road's bright crown,
 As it dips to the sapphire day!
All roads may meet at the world's end,
 But, hey for the heart of the May!
Come, choose your road and away, dear lad,
 Come choose your road and away.*

THE LIGHTS OF HOME

I

PILOT, how far from home?—

Not far, not far to-night,

A flight of spray, a sea-bird's flight,

A flight of tossing foam,

And then the lights of home!—

II

And, yet again, how far?

Seems you the way so brief?

Those lights beyond the roaring reef

Were lights of moon and star,

Far, far, none knows how far!

III

PILOT, how far from home?—

The great stars pass away

Before Him as a flight of spray,

Moons as a flight of foam!

I see the lights of home.

CREDO

I

THOU that art throned so far above
All earthly names, e'en those we deem
Eternal, e'en that name of Love
Which — as one speaketh in a dream —
We whisper, ere the morning break
And the hands yearn and the heart ache,

II

O Thou that reignest, whom of old
Men sought to appease by praise or prayer;
The spirit's little gifts of gold,
The heart's faint frankincense and myrrh,
Though we — the sons of deeper days —
Can bring Thee neither prayer nor praise,

III

We have not turned in doubt aside,
Nor mocked with our ephemeral breath
The little creeds that man's poor pride
Still fashions in these gulfs of death,
The little creeds that only prove
Thou art so far, so far above,

IV

So far beyond all Space and Time,
So infinitely far that none,
Though by ten thousand heavens he climb
Higher, shall yet be higher by one;
So far that — whelmed with light — we dare,
Father, to know that Thou art here.

By ALFRED NOYES

Poems

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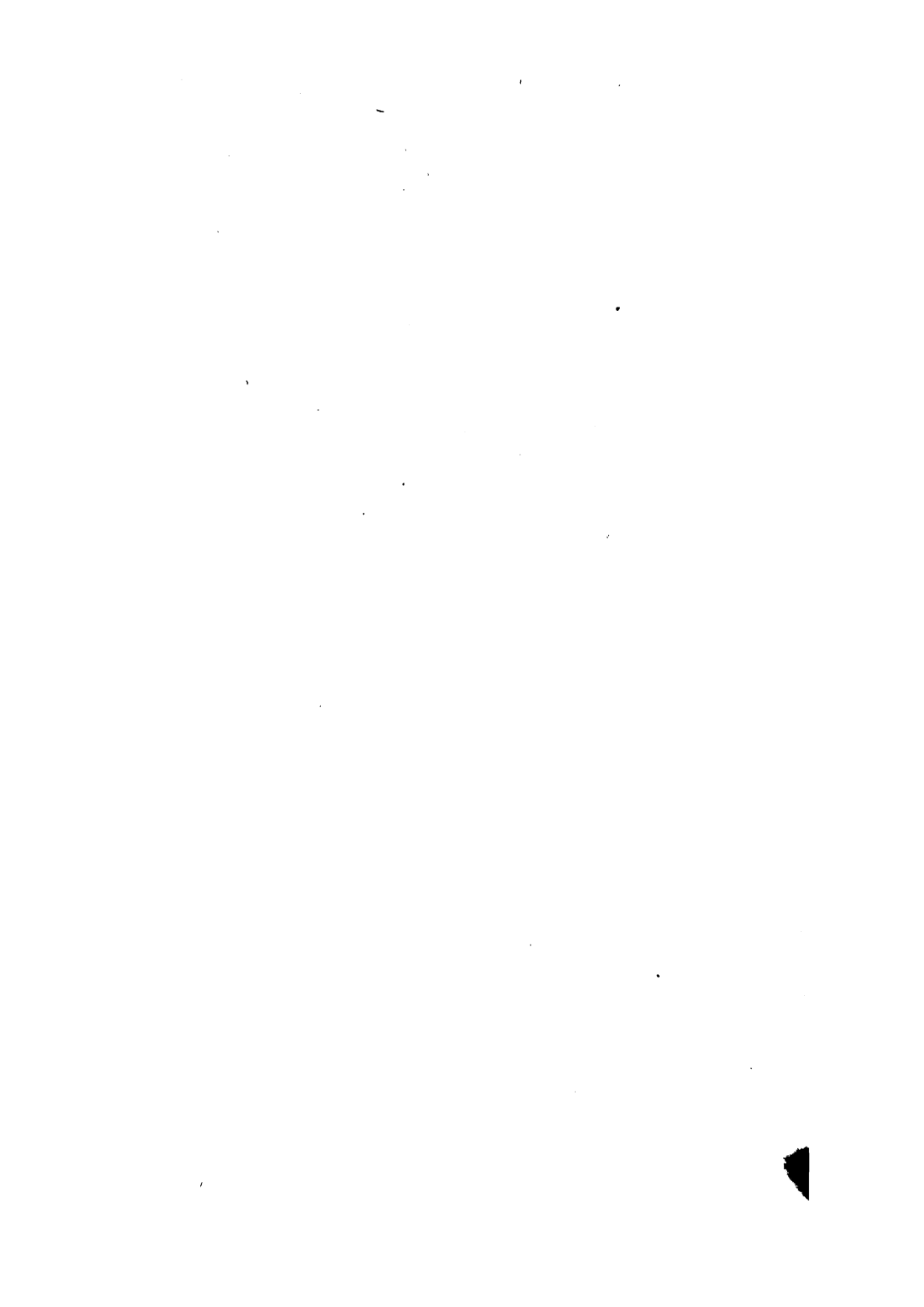
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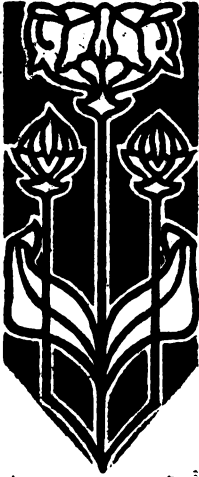
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